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AN EXPOSITION
or
ST. PAUL'S
EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.



AN EXPOSITION
OF
ST. PAUL'S
EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

BY THE
REV. HENRY W. WILLIAMS,
AUTHOR OF "THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD," "UNION WITH CHRIST," ETC.

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PREFACE.

THE following work is designed to assist the devout student of the New Testament to trace the entire course of thought which St. Paul has followed in his Epistle to the Romans, and to apprehend the deep truths which his statements and reasonings involve.

It is original. The exposition of St. Paul's great argument here presented is the result of careful and earnest study, continued through many years; and, in preparing this work, the author felt it right, in the first instance, to compose his own notes without an extended examination of the opinions of others. But, having done so, he regarded it as no less a duty to examine all the leading Commentaries on the Epistle to which he could gain access; and to revise what he had written with the aid of the additional light thus obtained, and with a conscientious solicitude to arrive, in every instance, at the true meaning of the Apostle's language.

Throughout the work, the author has had respect

to the precise shades of thought indicated by the delicate turns of expression in the original ; although he has expressly cited the original only where it appeared absolutely necessary to do so.

It is his hope and prayer, that, under the Divine blessing, this work may be rendered useful to many, especially in that religious Communion in which it has been his privilege and honour, during the last thirty-six years, to exercise his ministry.

EXETER,

November 11th, 1868.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Epistle to the Romans is the most elaborate doctrinal Epistle which we have from the pen of the Apostle Paul, and confessedly occupies a distinguished place among the Sacred Writings of the New Testament. Its *genuineness* has never been questioned; and although some modern critics have suggested doubts as to the last two chapters, whether they originally formed part of it, or were composed by the Apostle at a different time, these doubts have no valid foundation, and no theory adverse to the *integrity* of the Epistle has ever gained adherents. The Epistle bears the name of Paul; it is referred to and cited as his by a series of Christian writers from the Apostolic period; and its whole internal character accords with its Pauline authorship, evincing, as it does, the powerful working of feelings appropriate to "the Apostle of the Gentiles," who still cherished a most affectionate interest in his brethren of the race of Israel, and presenting views of the Christian scheme on which, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, and his other undoubted Epistles, St. Paul delighted to dwell.

A special interest attaches to this Epistle, as an *argumentative exposition* of many of the great doctrines of Christianity, and as placing the whole subject of *the Christian salvation* in a clear and striking light. In every age of the Church

its great importance has been recognised; and, in the controversies of the present day, it stands as an impregnable barrier against various forms of error with which the pure truth of Christ is assailed. It is no slight privilege to the devout student of Divine truth, to be permitted to sit at the feet of the Apostle Paul, as he unfolds the Christian system, in the great facts on which it reposes,—the ample provisions of grace which it sets forth,—the rich and exhaustless blessings which it offers, meeting, as they do, the deepest wants and loftiest aspirations of our nature,—and the varied duties which it enforces.

In entering upon the study of this Epistle, it is desirable to bear in mind the *character* and *state* of the *Church at Rome*, to which it was addressed,—the *circumstances of the Apostle* when he composed it,—and the *special occasion*, if any, which called it forth. After adverting to these topics, we may properly glance at its general *character* and *structure*, and point out some of its *bearings* on the great subjects of *modern theological controversy*.

I. There is every probability that the *Church at Rome* was founded by some of the Roman Jews and proselytes who were present at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. (Acts ii. 10.) If Andronicus and Junias, to whom the Apostle refers in xvi. 7, as having been “in Christ” before himself, were residents in Rome, they were probably among those who were present at this great festival, and who were subdued by the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost, accompanying the testimony of Jesus, to “the obedience of faith.” There appears to be conclusive evidence that the Church at Rome was *not* founded by St. Peter; and this, indeed, is admitted

by some of the ablest of the modern Romanists. It is clear from this Epistle, that St. Peter was not in that city when it was sent, or St. Paul certainly would not have passed *him* over in the affectionate greetings with which he closes it. Several expressions and statements in the Epistle suggest the conclusion, that *no Apostle* had as yet visited Rome. The increase of the Church there may be accounted for by several considerations. The Jews were numerous in Rome; and we learn even from pagan authors, that many of the citizens were attracted to their worship, and that some of the more earnest among them became proselytes to the Jewish faith. These last would be prepared to inquire into the claims of the Lord Jesus, and to receive the message of salvation through Him, with greater candour and readiness than the Jews themselves, though some of these had evidently joined the Christian community. Then, also, there was a constant influx of people to Rome, as the metropolis of the world; and many who had embraced Christianity in other places—many who had listened to the Apostle Paul, as he taught in Asia, Macedonia, and Greece—were attracted thither, and strengthened the Christian cause. The list of salutations with which the Epistle closes shows, that several persons whom St. Paul had known and loved in his various spheres of labour—several even of those who had shown him special kindness, and had actively co-operated with him—had gone to Rome, and were identified with the Church there. So frequent, also, was the communication between the capital of the Empire and the provinces, that these Christians could easily send tidings of their welfare, and of the state and prospects

of the Church at Rome, to the communities which they had left. This consideration sufficiently explains the statement of the Apostle, that the "faith" of the Roman Christians was "spoken of throughout the whole world," (i. 8,)—the reference being to *Christian circles*, in which everything that affected "the Kingdom of God" would be regarded with lively interest.

It has been alleged by some modern critics, that the existence of an influential Christian community in Rome is inconsistent with the narrative given in Acts xxviii of St. Paul's interview with the Jews in that city, when he actually visited it. But there is no such inconsistency. The action of the Christian Church at Rome, on receiving tidings of the approach of the Apostle, is stated in verse 15; and it is such as we might have expected from the Church to which this Epistle had been sent. That the Jews, in their reply to St. Paul, spoke contemptuously of the sect of the Christians, (verse 22,) may be accounted for on the ground, that there was an entire separation between the Christians and the Jews who adhered to the worship of the synagogue, and that these last affected, not indeed a total ignorance of the Christian community in the city, but an indifference to it as insignificant, and, as far as its influence extended, injurious. To some, perhaps, it may appear strange, that the first act of St. Paul, on arriving at Rome, was to call *the Jews* together, and address them, instead of calling together the Christian community; but this was in accordance with the principle which had influenced all his labours as an Apostle,—to go *first* to the members of the race of Israel, to declare to

them the Christian message; and doubtless he feared that the peculiar circumstances under which he came to Rome might militate against the success of the efforts which he had hoped to put forth in the great metropolis, as in other cities, to bring the Jews to the faith of Christ, and then into holy fellowship with believing Gentiles. It was a wise and kind procedure, then, to endeavour to remove their prejudices, by a frank and open statement of his position and his views, that, although a prisoner, he might reason and expostulate with them, as he had hoped to have done, had he visited Rome under more favourable circumstances.

It is obvious from the Epistle, that the Church at Rome consisted both of Jews and Gentiles, though the latter element seems to have predominated. (xi. 13, 14.) Many of the doctrinal discussions are carried on with an express reference to the mixed composition of the Church; and the admonitions contained in chapters xiv. xv. would be unintelligible were we not to recognise it. To this Church, as existing in the metropolis of the Empire, and likely to become very influential, the Apostle naturally turned with deep interest.

II. The *circumstances of St. Paul* when he wrote this Epistle are indicated with great distinctness in the Epistle itself. He was at Corinth, preparing to set out for Jerusalem, with the contributions of the Churches of Macedonia and Achaia, for the relief of the poor saints in Judæa. (xv. 25—27; xvi. 1, 2, 23.) It had been his original intention to sail from Corinth to Syria; but being aware of a plot formed by the Jews to take away his life, should he adopt that route, he changed his pur-

pose, and returned to Macedonia. After very a short stay there, he sailed from Philippi, touching at Troas, Mitylene, Miletus, and other places, as recorded in Acts xx. This Epistle, then, was written towards the close of his third great missionary journey, probably in the spring of A.D. 58. It was designed to be preparatory to a personal visit to the Roman Church. There were, indeed, some painful forebodings in the mind of the Apostle, as to the issue of the mission which he had now undertaken; but he cherished the hope that, in answer to the prayers of God's people, which he earnestly solicited, he should successfully accomplish it, and then proceed to Rome under favourable circumstances, to establish the Church there, and afterwards go forward to evangelize the kingdom of Spain. But in the inscrutable arrangements of the Divine Providence, his hopes were only partially realised. His visit to Jerusalem led to a painful interruption of his plans, and when at length he came to Rome, he came as a prisoner, whose case was to be decided before the imperial tribunal.

III. In inquiring into the *special occasion*, if any, of the writing of this Epistle, and the *primary object* which the Apostle contemplated, expositors have been met with two facts;—first, that the greater portion of the Epistle has almost the form of a doctrinal treatise, intended to set forth the grand arrangements of the Christian scheme, for the instruction of the Church in every age; and, secondly, that in the later chapters there is a protracted reference to diversities of opinion and practice which existed among the members of the Roman Church, and which threatened to involve, and to some extent did actually involve, aliena-

tion of affection. It appears unquestionable, that *one* object which St. Paul had in view, was to remove this alienation, and to lay a firm basis for cordial agreement and co-operation among all the Christians at Rome; but it would be an exaggeration to contend, that the whole course of his doctrinal exposition was entered upon chiefly to prepare the way for these expostulations. A higher and grander object was present to his mind, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He wished to develop "the Gospel of God," as the one remedy for all the guilt and pollution of mankind,—to set forth the blessings which it offers, and the simple condition on which our actual experience of these blessings is suspended,—to trace Christian experience in its commencement and progress, in the holy peace and the spiritual life and power which it involves, and the consummated glory in which it is to issue,—and to unfold the relative position of Jews and Gentiles under the evangelical constitution, and the harmony of that constitution with the principles which had regulated the Divine procedures towards mankind, and especially towards the Church, in past ages. Such an exposition of the Christian scheme might be fitly addressed to the Church in the metropolis of the Roman Empire; presenting, as it did, *all* the commingling elements which, in any place, entered into the composition of the Churches. It was eminently fitting, also, that St. Paul, as "the Apostle of the Gentiles," should address such an Epistle to that community; and the Holy Spirit, who inspired him to write it, and who moulded his thoughts and guided his words, has given to the world, in this Epistle, an invaluable treasure.

IV. The general *character* of the Epistle has been indicated in the remarks just offered. While it retains the form of a Letter, and in some places touches upon the personal feelings of St. Paul, and the plans which he had formed, it presents a closely-reasoned exposition of the leading arrangements of the Christian scheme, as they bear upon human salvation, and a series of practical exhortations to the various duties of the Christian life. Its general *structure* is simple and obvious. It consists of the Introduction (i. 1—15); the Doctrinal Exposition (i. 16—xi. 36); Practical Exhortations (xii. 1—xv. 13); and the Conclusion (xv. 14—xvi. 27).

The *course of thought* which the Apostle pursues under each of these Divisions is traced in the "General Outline" prefixed to the notes on each chapter. It may not be improper, however, here to glance at the *leading topics* which are considered in the *doctrinal* portion of the Epistle.

After expressing his holy triumph in the Gospel, as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," St. Paul goes on to speak of it as clearly unfolding the Divine method of justification,—the "righteousness" which God imputes to men according to His own scheme of grace. He shows the necessity of such a method of justification, by exhibiting at length the state of guilt and condemnation in which all men, both Jews and Gentiles, are involved; he develops, briefly but forcibly, this method of justification itself; and then he shows that, while it is Christianity that clearly "manifests" it, yet the earlier revelation bore testimony to it, and the case of Abraham himself presented a striking illustration of it. He next dwells on the privileges

and hopes of justified persons; and traces the contrast between the effects of the transgression of the first head and representative of the human race, and the blessed results of the mediatorial righteousness and perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the Second Man." He goes on to guard the method of gratuitous justification by faith against antinomian perversion; and, in doing so, enlarges on that life in Christ which is inseparably connected with a participation in His death, and which evinces its reality and power in a course of active obedience. He then passes to the relation of believers to the law; showing that, while they are released from its condemning grasp, in virtue of their sharing in the benefits of the Redeemer's death, they are yet bound to render a spiritual obedience to God. That obedience is not at all the ground of their acceptance; but it is the grand result to which the scheme of gratuitous justification, and the new inward life which accompanies it, are directed. This view led the Apostle to trace the process through which the mind passes, from the first consciousness of responsibility and moral restraint until it finds rest and peace in Christ. He depicts the struggles of guilty passion with the law that denounces it, and then with the better aspirations of the mind, awakened by the light that shines on it from above; until, at length, the soul, conscious of its own captivity to sin, anxiously inquires for some Deliverer from without, and, being led to Christ, finds in Him freedom, not only from condemnation, but from the power that enthralled it, and is now enabled to fulfil the righteous precepts of the law with cheerfulness and delight. In describing this deliver-

ance, St. Paul adverts to the work of the Holy Spirit on the believing mind; and he now enlarges, with sacred interest, on this glorious theme, and, passing forward to the future life, exhibits that consummated and everlasting glory of which the indwelling of the Spirit is the earnest and pledge.

Having thus unfolded the Christian salvation, together with the method of its attainment, St. Paul goes on to consider the bearing of the new economy on the position of the Jewish people, and their supposed prescriptive rights and privileges. He shows that the principles involved in this economy had characterised God's arrangements respecting His Church in every age; and, after a beautiful development of "the righteousness of faith," as that which is now offered equally to Jews and Gentiles, and the reception of which, together with the open confession of the Lord Jesus in the way that He has appointed, constitutes any man a member of the true Church of God, he lingers on the case of Israel, declares that that race, as such, is by no means cast off, but that the highest evangelical privileges are open to all Israelites who will only embrace the scheme of grace in Christ,—and, after admonishing the Gentile believers not to glory in their supposed advantages over the ancient people of God, he glances prophetically at the long night of ignorance and unbelief which was before the Jewish people as a whole, and then dwells with exultation on the grand consummation when they shall all embrace the Saviour, and the receiving of them shall be as "life from the dead."

Such is a general view of the *order* and *connection* of the

topics which the Apostle discusses in the doctrinal portion of this Epistle. It remains only to advert to a few of the bearings of the Epistle on the great subjects of modern theological controversy.

It is unquestionable that, in this Epistle, St. Paul gives prominence to the great *facts* of the Christian history. In the very opening of it, the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth as Himself *the theme* of the Gospel. The momentous events of His *death*, His *resurrection*, His *ascension to heaven*, and His *mediatorial reign*, are everywhere assumed as certain and unquestionable; and their *relation* to the economy of grace, to the privileges conferred on believers, to that new inward life which pervades their souls, and to the glory that awaits them, is distinctly and emphatically brought out. Nor does the Apostle leave us in doubt as to his views of the Person of the Redeemer. He recognises, in the most explicit terms, His true and proper Godhead, His relation to the Father as THE SON, in a sense unique and exclusive, and His participation also of our nature in its weakness and lowliness. (i. 1—4; viii. 3, 4; ix. 5.) No one, surely, can rise from the devout perusal of this Epistle without a profound conviction, that the Christian scheme, as held by the Apostle Paul, involved the stupendous facts which are still cherished by the faith of Christendom, and that all the doctrines, and privileges, and duties, and hopes of our religion cluster around the Person of the crucified and risen Saviour.

The bearing of this Epistle on the great doctrine of the *atonement* is equally important and decisive. While it recognises the self-sacrificing love which was displayed in

the life and death of Jesus, and enforces the lessons which that love should impress on all His followers, (xv. 2, 3,) it sets forth the *vicarious* character of His death,—affirms that it was endured *on account of the sins of men*, and to *open the way to their remission*,—and represents it as the result of a *Divine appointment*, designed to uphold the principles of that *moral government*, the claims of which are sacred and inviolable. (iii. 25, 26; iv. 25; v. 6—10; viii. 32.) The modern theories which, retaining the atonement in name, rob it of its essential elements, are alien to the theology of this Epistle. In the view of the Apostle Paul, the Lord Jesus, Himself perfectly pure and spotless, stood as the Representative and Substitute of our fallen race, and for our sakes submitted to a penal death, even the death of the cross, that through Him righteousness and life might be vouchsafed to every believer, and yet the justice of God, as the Moral Ruler of the universe, be maintained unimpaired, and the highest ends of a moral administration be accomplished.

To the *nature* of the Christian salvation, as including *justification* and the *indwelling of the Spirit of Christ*,—each of these blessings having an important relation to the eternal life and glory which awaits Christ's people in the world to come,—this Epistle bears a distinct and unequivocal testimony. It affords also the most decisive evidence that the *mode* of the Christian salvation is by *personal faith in the Lord Jesus*, as the crucified and risen Saviour. Two systems are, in the present day, as at the time of the Reformation, brought face to face: the one representing the Christian salvation as something received through the

virtue of the sacraments, and especially through a mystical communication of the human nature of our Lord to individual men by means of the sacraments; the other recognising justification as the first great blessing of the Christian salvation, to be immediately followed by the gift of the Holy Ghost, to shed abroad the love of God in the heart, and to communicate a new inward life which shall form the earnest of eternal life,—and affirming that these blessings are to be received through personal faith, the faith which appropriates the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, while it rests with sacred firmness on the arrangements of the Divine counsel. There can be no question, surely, that it is the latter of these systems which the Apostle Paul here develops; and the Church of Christ may well cherish this Epistle as establishing, beyond the possibility of doubt, that great doctrine of *justification by grace through faith* which was brought out at the Reformation, and the preaching of which has ever been signally honoured by the Holy Ghost.

It is worthy of attention, also, that in this Epistle, as in all the other writings of the New Testament, the greatest honour is put upon *the ancient Scriptures*. In introducing himself to the Church at Rome, and speaking of “the Gospel” unto which he had been “separated,” St. Paul refers to its great facts and arrangements as having been intimated beforehand by God Himself in the prophetic Scriptures; and the sentiment which he thus advances influences all his discourses and reasonings. He appeals to the Old Testament again and again in proof of his positions; he brings forward passages which shadowed

forth the leading features of the evangelical economy; and, at length, as he winds up his Epistle with a doxology remarkably sublime and comprehensive, he refers again to "the Scriptures of the prophets" as receiving their fulfilment in the universal announcement of the Christian message, and the wide diffusion of the blessings which it makes known. No one who is willing to sit at the feet of the Apostle Paul, and to follow his teaching relative to the Sacred Writings of the Old Covenant, can fail to admit their *Divine inspiration*, or to cherish them with veneration and love.

We may close this Introduction with the words of Chrysostom, as quoted by Dr. Tholuck and Dean Alford,—words which are especially applicable to this Epistle:—"Like a wall of adamant, the writings of St. Paul form a bulwark around all the Churches of the world, while himself, as some mighty champion, stands even now in the midst, casting down every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE ROMANS.

CHAPTER I.

1. PAUL, a servant of Jesus Christ, *called to be an*
a Acts xxii. 21; 1 Cor. i. 1; Gal. i. 1; 1 Tim. i. 11; ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 11.

CHAPTER I.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

ST. PAUL commences this Epistle with his *salutation* to the Christians at Rome. With this, however, he interweaves some of the great truths on which his mind was fixed, and which, in the course of the Epistle, he was about more fully to bring out. Having affirmed his own call to the apostolic office, and his commission to make known the gospel to all nations, he adverts to the character of the Roman Church,—to his deep and affectionate interest in its welfare,—to his earnest desire to visit it,—and to his hope that, at some very early period, God would permit him to carry out his long-cherished purpose, and to contribute in person to the spiritual establishment of its members.

From this address the Apostle passes, in an easy and beautiful manner, to the *great theme* of his Epistle,—*the Gospel of Christ*, considered as that scheme of truth which unfolds the method of salvation established by God for all mankind, and which His own gracious power renders effectual in the case of every believer. He goes on to set forth

apostle, 'separated unto the Gospel of God,

b Acts ix. 15; xiii. 2; Gal. i. 15.

its first and great peculiarity,—that it discloses the *righteousness* which is of God, and which becomes ours through faith. And then, to lay aright the foundation of this great doctrine, he affirms the general principle, that the wrath of God rests upon all men who, resisting and counteracting the truth which they possess, neglect Himself, or violate their duties to their fellow-men. Resting upon this principle, he proceeds to establish the universal guilt of man; and taking up, in the first instance, the case of the Gentile world, he shows how they had turned away from the knowledge of God, and, surrendering themselves to their own selfish passions and to the pride of intellect, had wandered further and further from the path of truth, and purity, and goodness, until God, in His righteous judgment, had given them up to the most debasing and revolting forms of vice.

Verse 1. *A servant of Jesus Christ.* This expression corresponds to the phrase, "servant of the Lord," applied to Moses, Joshua, David, and others, who, under the Old Testament dispensation, were engaged in the special service of Jehovah. The idea which it makes prominent is that of *unreserved subjection* to the Lord Jesus Christ, and *entire dedication* to the interests of His kingdom. In the very opening of the Epistle, St. Paul thus marks the truth, that he was not an independent teacher,—that he had not to set forth any speculations of his own, or to order the Churches according to his own private estimate of propriety; but simply to deliver Christ's message, to enforce His precepts, and to adjust the arrangements of His Churches according to His will. But this subjection to the Redeemer, and this entire self-dedication to Him, are

elements of character which every believer is bound to maintain. Then only do we assume our right position, when we give ourselves up to be ruled by the will of Christ, and to seek in all things His glory.

Called to be an Apostle. Here St. Paul fixes the attention of the Roman Christians on the *official character* with which he had been invested by the Lord Jesus. He who condescended to arrest him in the height of his rage and fury against the Church, constituted him one of His Apostles, and commissioned him to go "to the people and to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith" in Himself. In some of his Epistles, St. Paul *vindicates* his apostolic character: here it sufficed to *affirm* it in distinct and emphatic terms.—The office of an Apostle was the highest in the Church, and involved peculiar authority. It was essential to that office, to be able to bear a personal testimony to our Lord's resurrection from the dead; and, in the case of St. Paul, this requisite was afforded by the very circumstances of his conversion. The Apostles, also, were constituted the *authoritative teachers* of the Christian scheme; and, to qualify them for this high duty, they were favoured with a special illumination of the Spirit, while the miraculous powers with which they were invested established their loftiest claims. The Lord Jesus sent forth the faithful eleven, even as the Father sent Him forth, to declare His message, to unfold the method of salvation, to assure men of forgiveness and eternal life upon their embracing Him, to trace out the entire scheme of duty, and to establish His Church upon the simple and comprehensive plan of the new economy. And, by His sovereign authority, He added Paul to the number, imparting to him

2. (Which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,)

c Gen. iii. 15; xxii. 18; xxvi. 4; xlix. 10; Deut. xviii. 15; 2 Sam. vii. 12; Ps. cxxxii. 11; Isa. iv. 2; vii. 14; ix. 6; xl. 10; Jer. xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 14, 15, 16; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; xxxvii. 24; Dan. ix. 24; Micah vii. 20; Acts xiii. 32; Rom. xv. 8; Titus ii. 13.
d Rom. iii. 21; xvi. 26; Gal. iii. 8.

special gifts, and opening to him a yet wider sphere of usefulness than was vouchsafed to any of those whom He had chosen in the days of His flesh.

Separated unto the Gospel of God. This clause beautifully supplements the preceding one. In it St. Paul not only recognises the immediate action of the Lord Jesus, in calling him to be one of His distinguished servants; but also affirms that, from the period of that calling, his *one business* was to make known the gospel, and to bring men instrumentally under its power. The phrase, "the Gospel of God," is suggestive. It implies not only a system of glad tidings stamped with the *authority* of God, but one which *flows* to us from Him, and *discloses* His *graciousness* and *benignity*.

Verse 2. *Which he had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.* This verse is one of innumerable passages in which the Apostle, following in the steps of the Lord Jesus, recognises the *Divine authority* of the Old Testament, and treats the writings comprised in it as having a *sacred* character.—The general sentiment of this verse is one which well merits our attention. Christianity, the Apostle reminds us, did not burst suddenly upon the world. The manifestation in our nature of a Divine Person,—the working out of our redemption by His sufferings, and death, and resurrection,—and the establishment of a rich and ample economy of grace through Him,—had been *prepared for* in the earlier arrangements of

3. Concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,

God with the human family, and shadowed forth in the earlier communications of truth. The intimations of prophecy, and the various types of Him who was to come, had given to the thoughtful and devout mind the *promise* of that perfect scheme of truth and blessing which is now unfolded.—The testimony of the ancient Scriptures to the Lord Jesus, and to the great facts of His redeeming work, was a subject with which the mind of St. Paul was familiar, and on which, it is evident, he delighted to dwell. For many years he had been accustomed, on visiting a town where the Jews had a synagogue, or even the humblest place of meeting, to go among them, and to “reason with them out of the Scriptures,” showing them “that the Messiah must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead,” and that Jesus was the Messiah.—It is worthy of attention, also, that the Apostle, addressing, as he was, a mixed community, and one in which some of the Jewish Christians were concerned for the peculiar dignity which they imagined to belong to them in the kingdom of God, appeals thus early to the ancient Scriptures, as containing intimations of that new and comprehensive economy, under which the offer of salvation was to be equally proclaimed to all mankind, and Jew and Gentile were to become one in Christ.

Verse 3. *Concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.* It is desirable, on several grounds, to retain the order of the words in the original, “Concerning His Son, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead,—Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom we have received grace and apostleship.” St. Paul first designates our blessed

which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

e Matt. i. 6, 16; Luke i. 32; Acts ii. 30; 2 Tim. ii. 8.

f John i. 14; Gal. iv. 4.

Lord by His highest and most august appellation, THE SON OF GOD. Here, for a moment, he pauses; and speaks of the two natures of the Redeemer, His humanity, in which He was a descendant of the royal house of David, and His higher nature,—a nature of pure spirituality and essential holiness,—in which He was the Son of God. But the emphatic use of the expression, “concerning His Son,” in the opening of this verse, followed as it is by these explanatory clauses, clearly marks the hypostatic union, and shows us that the Lord Jesus, *in His one indivisible Person*, is the Son of God. The Eternal Son has taken our nature into an indissoluble union with Himself; and to Him we turn, with lowly reverence, but with sacred confidence and love, as our Lord and God, and yet our Brother and our Friend.

Which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. This statement is not simply equivalent to “who was of the seed of David,” but contains a direct reference to the formation of our Lord’s humanity in the womb of the Virgin. Expositors have properly collated Gal. iv. 4:—“God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” The expression, “the flesh,” stands as the designation of *human nature*, but with an *allusion* to its present material constitution. In some passages this last idea is the prominent one: here it has only a secondary place. The reference to our Lord’s descent from David, beautifully harmonises with the appeal made, in the preceding verse, to the prophetic intimations of the Messiah, and of the economy of grace through Him, in the ancient

4. And **declared to be the Son of God with** Gr. *determined.* g Acts xiii. 33.

Scriptures. Every devout Jew loved to think of the great Restorer as the Son of David and the Heir of his throne, whose sceptre should never lose its glory, and before whom, at last, every hostile power should fall. But this Son of David was to arise when the royal house should be in a state of lowliness and depression. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." (Isa. xi. 1.) This was eminently fulfilled in the case of the Lord Jesus; and the Apostle could appeal, without any fear of contradiction, to the certainty of His descent from David through His virgin-mother, as well as in virtue of His legal relation to Joseph, His reputed father.

Verse 4. *And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.* To preserve the contrast between this clause and the preceding one, it is necessary to understand the phrase, "the Spirit of holiness," of the *Divine nature of our Lord*. There is an obvious correspondence in form between the expressions, *κατὰ σάρκα* and *κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης*, which must not be overlooked. Besides, had the Apostle designed to refer to the Holy Spirit, we have every reason to think that he would have employed the usual appellation, instead of that peculiar phraseology which he has actually chosen. The view of our Lord's higher nature here suggested is richly instructive. In addition to our humanity, which, as adapted to the present world and its varied requirements, is spoken of as "the flesh," He who came to redeem us possessed a nature of *pure spirituality*, and one to which *holiness* is not only *essential*, but from which it *emanates*. We are reminded

power, according ^{to} the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead :

h Heb. ix. 14.

here of our Lord's own emphatic words, "God is a *Spirit*;" and we naturally recall the profound reverence with which the loftiest created beings adore the essential *holiness* of the Triune Jehovah.—In this, His higher nature, the Redeemer is affirmed to be *the Son of God*; and His right to this august appellation, viewed as implying His eternal and Divine Sonship, was attested, with convincing power, by His resurrection from the dead. We have only to think of the circumstances of our Lord's trial,—to remember how, after various charges alleged against Him had failed, the High Priest solemnly adjured Him to say, whether He was indeed "the Messiah, the Son of God," and how, upon His replying in the affirmative, the Sanhedrim exclaimed that He had spoken blasphemy, and adjudged Him to be worthy of death,—and to remember, yet further, that the Jews, who originally charged Him before Pilate with sedition, ultimately disclosed the real ground on which they had condemned Him, affirming, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God,"—we have only to recall these things, and we shall perceive, that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, while it vindicated *all* His claims, and impressed the indubitable seal of Divine authority on *all* His teaching, vindicated *this* claim in particular, and that He was thus *definitely marked out*, as the word used by St. Paul signifies, by the Eternal Father, as the Son in that unique and exclusive sense, in which it implies oneness of nature with the Father, and a participation of all the perfections of the Godhead.—It is generally considered that the words "with power" are

to be connected with "declared," the reference being to the powerful and convincing declaration of our Lord's Sonship thus afforded. Nor should the peculiar form of the last expression be overlooked. Literally rendered it is, "by the resurrection of the dead;" and the truth which underlies it is, that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, as the Head and Forerunner of His people, *ensured* the resurrection of mankind. He is "the Resurrection and the Life;" and as we think of His vacant sepulchre, we not only rejoice in the life which, as the risen Saviour, He now imparts, but we look forward to His ultimate triumph over death, when "all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."—After the words, "the resurrection from the dead," there follows in the original (see note on v. 3) the comprehensive and beautiful designation of the Saviour, "Jesus Christ our Lord." Thus, in the opening of this invaluable Epistle, St. Paul not only dwells with sacred interest on the *Person* of the Redeemer, but adverts also to the *offices* which He sustains in the economy of redemption. On these emphatic words we may well linger; for, indeed, the appellations of the Lord Jesus have become so familiar to us, that we are in danger of passing over their deep import. "Jesus" is specially the *name*, the *personal designation*, of Him in whom we trust; and it fixes our attention on the salvation which He has provided, and which He now actually confers, while it connects that salvation with God as its source. The term "Christ" points Him out as the long-expected Messiah; and the phrase, "our Lord," indicates His sovereign dominion over His people, a dominion which they cheerfully and gratefully acknowledge. It places Him before us as

5. By whom we have received grace and apostleship, ||for obedience to the faith among all nations, 'for His name :

i Rom. xii. 3 ; xv. 15 ; 1 Cor. xv. 10 ; Gal. i. 15 ; ii. 9 ; Ephes. iii. 8.

|| Or, to the obedience of faith.

k Acts vi. 7 ; Rom. xvi. 26.

l Acts ix. 15.

entitled to the lowliest homage and the unreserved obedience of all mankind ; and as receiving that homage and obedience from all who are really His. So rich and comprehensive are the views of the adorable Redeemer, which were ever present to the mind of St. Paul, and which he sought to keep before the Churches.

Verse 5. *By whom we have received grace and apostleship.* Here the Apostle gratefully acknowledges the blessings which he had himself received from the Lord Jesus. He had become a partaker of "*grace*" through Him. His sins had been forgiven, and, as an act of unmerited mercy, he had been placed in a relation of acceptance and favour with God, while the inward life of spiritual affections had been diffused through his soul. From Jesus, also, as the exalted Mediator, he had received *the office of an Apostle*. The express appointment of Christ invested him with its high and solemn responsibilities ; while His abounding grace imparted to him every qualification for the faithful and successful discharge of its duties.

For obedience to the faith among all nations for His name. This was the great end for which Paul was constituted an Apostle. He was sent forth to summon men to that obedience to the Lord Jesus which consists, primarily, in a cordial reception of His gospel, and a personal trust in Him for salvation and life. His commission, also, was to the nations generally ; and though many turned away from the

6. Among whom are ye also, the called of Jesus Christ :

message of grace, yet was he the instrument of leading some of almost every nation to the acknowledgment of the Saviour, and the enjoyment of His love. And thus *the "Name" of Christ was magnified and honoured.* The submission of men to His authority, and their experience of His grace, showed forth His glory, and formed an earnest of His ultimate triumph, when "every knee," whether willing or reluctant, "shall bow" to Him, and "every tongue shall confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Verse 6. *Among whom are ye also, the called of Jesus Christ.* Gratefully does the Apostle turn to the Christians at Rome, as having a place among those who had yielded obedience to the gospel, and in whom the Name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And he uses, in describing their state and privileges, one of those pregnant expressions which convey a rich fulness of truth,—"*the called of Jesus Christ.*" Doubtless this phrase contains a reference, first of all, to *the call of Christ*, quickening us, when in a state of alienation and spiritual death, so as to produce incipient spiritual feeling which, if cherished and improved, will lead us onward to the full enjoyment of life in Him. It marks, in the next place, *the position of Christ's people*, as gathered around Him, called by His name, and invested with the peculiar privileges of His own. And it carries forward the devout mind to *the glorious issue* to which "our high calling" is designed to lead,—even our perfect assimilation to the Redeemer Himself, and our eternal participation in His rest and triumph. Thus does it comprehensively express the work of grace in the hearts of

7. To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, ^mcalled

m Rom. ix. 24 ; 1 Cor. i. 2 ; 1 Thess. iv. 7.

Christ's true followers, while it indicates the relations which they sustain, and the hopes which rise before them.

Verse 7. *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints.* Here two other views of the position and privileges of true Christians are given to us. They are the objects of *the Father's love*. He regards them with complacency, and designs their present and everlasting welfare. And they are called to the actual enjoyment of *holiness*, and the uniform development of it in their life and conversation. It was a cherished sentiment of the Apostle, that the gracious counsel of God, which is unfolded in the scheme of redemption, contemplates the perfecting of Christ's people in holy love, and that the Lord Jesus seeks that holiness in all whom He claims as His own, and over whom He rejoices as the purchase of His blood. He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the wish and prayer of St. Paul for the Roman Christians; and it forms his ordinary salutation in his Epistles. In each of those to Timothy, and in that to Titus, the form is enlarged,—*"Grace, mercy, and peace:"* but in his other Epistles the present mode of expression is found. The import of these words is deep and comprehensive. "Grace" includes the *favour* with which God regards His own people, and the communications of *inward life and power* which He imparts to them, investing them with moral loveliness, and qualifying them for active spiritual effort; while "peace" expresses the *deep inward serenity* which meets all the

to be saints: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

n 1 Cor. i. 3; 2 Cor. i. 2; Gal. i. 3.

wants of the human spirit, while it forms the earnest of the yet higher blessedness of the life to come. These blessings flow to us from the Eternal Father, who is the Fountain of life, and purity, and joy, and strength, and of whose abounding graciousness to man, though combined with the firm assertion of the principles of His government, the scheme of redemption is the development. He, too, has become "*our Father*," in that high sense which the Christian economy unfolds, raising us to all the privileges of His family, and admitting us to that intimate fellowship with Him which results from our relation to the Incarnate Son.—But these blessings are sought also from "the Lord Jesus Christ." This association of the Redeemer with the Eternal Father, in the solemn supplication of spiritual blessing, is of profound significance. It recognises the mysterious dignity of His Person; for, as Olshausen has properly remarked, "the name of no man can be placed by the side of that of the Almighty. He only, in whom the Word of the Father, who is Himself God, became flesh, may be named beside Him; for men are commanded to honour Him even as they honour the Father."—It recognises also His office as the Mediator of the new covenant. Through Him the favour of God is consciously imparted to the human spirit; the inward life which pervades the souls of His people is a life derived from Him, and communicated by His Spirit; and the sacred peace which fills the hearts of His servants, is His own special gift. We may well recall his own beautiful and animating words, in His last address to His Apostles before

8. First, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that ²your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

o 1 Cor. i. 4; Phil. i. 3; Col. i. 3, 4; 1 Thess. i. 2; Philem. 4.

p Rom. xvi. 19; 1 Thess. i. 8.

He suffered, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John xiv. 27.)

Verse 8. *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.* Here St. Paul enters upon a statement of his feelings towards the believers at Rome; and, in particular, of the hope which he cherished of being permitted to visit them, and to contribute in person to their spiritual comfort and advancement. Several thoughts of deep interest are suggested by this opening remark. We can scarcely fail to observe, how impressively the Apostle adverts to *his own relation to God*, a relation in which he habitually gloried and rejoiced, "I thank *my God*;"—how distinctly he offers his thanksgivings *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, recognising Him as the Source of all the good which distinguished the Roman Christians;—how strongly he affirms his regard to *all* the Christians at Rome, however they might differ on some minor points;—and how he selects, as the special ground of his thanksgiving, their *faith*, the simplicity, and strength, and constancy of which were spoken of in all the other Churches of Christ. It is in this limited sense, but one which the words naturally suggest, that we are to understand the expression, "throughout the whole world." So frequent and general was the communication between Rome, the seat of the imperial power, and the various provinces of her extended Empire,

9. For 'God is my witness,' whom I serve || with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that 'without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

q Rom. ix. 1; 2 Cor. i. 23; Phil. i. 8; 1 Thess. ii. 5.
 r Acts xxvii. 23; 2 Tim. i. 3. || Or, *in my spirit*. John iv. 23, 24;
 Phil. iii. 3. s 1 Thess. iii. 10.

that in whatever part of her dominions a Christian Church was planted, there would be some persons who had heard, directly or indirectly, of the progress of Christianity in that great metropolis, and of the character of the Christian community which was there gathered.

Verse 9. *For God is my witness.* This is one of the instances in which St. Paul solemnly appeals to God as to the truth of his assertions. Others, the form of which is, if possible, still more emphatic, are found in this and in some others of his Epistles. It may suffice to adduce ix. 1:—"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost." These passages show that the Apostle did not understand our Lord's prohibition of swearing as extending to thoughtful appeals to God on special occasions, when an important purpose was to be accomplished. It has been properly remarked, that to no other witness of these prayers could he appeal. They were offered in secret; and only He "who seeth in secret" knew how earnestly and constantly His servant prayed for the believers in Rome.

Whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son. The word which we translate "serve" properly conveys the idea either of *sacred service* generally, or of *worship* in particular; and this statement forcibly expresses the character of St. Paul's whole ministerial career. As one consecrated to the special service of God, and cherishing

10. 'Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey "by the will of God to come unto you.

t Rom. xv. 23, 32; 1 Thess. iii. 10. u James iv. 15.

the devout affections which His grace inspired, he devoted himself to the announcement and unfolding of the gospel of His Son; and in that service all the faculties of his spiritual nature found their highest and most delightful exercise.

That without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers. It is instructive to mark the habit of St. Paul, to offer daily and fervent intercessions for the Churches of Christ, and to specify particular Churches, which either he himself had planted, or the circumstances of which had been brought before him. Of the Roman Christians he had heard in different places where he had exercised his ministry; for this is implied in his thanksgiving that "their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world;" and the last chapter of this Epistle shows that many persons who had received benefit from his ministry in other places were now resident at Rome. But, though separated from them, and though unknown in person to many of the Roman believers, he remembered them all in prayer. We may gather from this the high estimate which the Apostle formed of the value and power of prayer; and learn a lesson respecting the duty of remembering our fellow-Christians in our secret intercessions, and especially any with whom we may be acquainted as needing the special succours of Divine grace. Such intercessions, offered when only God is at hand to hear, form a beautiful development of the brotherly love of Christians,—of that deep spiritual sympathy which results

11. For I long to see you, that ^aI may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

^a Rom. xv. 29.

from the possession of a common life in Christ, and which is eminently pleasing to Him who designs that all His people should be one.

Verse 10. *Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.* In his prayers St. Paul recognised God's providential agency, and sought the interposition of His hand. It had long been his earnest desire to visit the Church at Rome; and he was accustomed to pray that God would open his path, and would at length, and that at no distant period, grant him a *favourable* journey to that great metropolis. In part his prayer was ultimately answered; but the circumstances under which he came to Rome were very different from those which he himself had sketched. Instead of that prosperous journey for which he had hoped, he suffered shipwreck in his voyage; and when he entered the city, he did so as a prisoner, to await the decision of the imperial tribunal on his case. So different, frequently, are the arrangements of God, even in regard to His most devoted servants, from those which they have desired and prayed for, even when the chief object on which their hearts are set is granted to them!

Verse 11. *For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.* It is the opinion of many expositors, that the Apostle refers here to the communication of *some miraculous gift* to the Roman believers, the possession of which might establish their faith in the Divine authority of the truth which they

12. That is, that I may be comforted together
 ||with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

|| Or, *in you.*

y Titus i. 4; 2 Peter i. 1.

had embraced. But it is more in accordance with the general tenor of his remarks, to regard him as referring to a richer communication of *spiritual grace* and *blessing*, tending to establish them in holy affections, as well as to enlarge their views of the Christian economy. St. Paul was pre-eminently qualified to unfold the entire scheme and counsel of God in relation to man's redemption,—to set forth the exalted privileges of believers,—and to guard the people of Christ against the subtle errors to which they were exposed. But he does not speak of *his* establishing them; he uses the passive form, “to the end ye *may be established*,”—since he ever remembered that it is God who establishes men in Christ. A foreign expositor has properly called attention to this, and has referred, in illustration, to xvi. 25—27. We may adduce also 2 Cor. i. 21, “Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.”

Verse 12. *That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.* The word which we translate “comforted” is one of those the full import of which can scarcely be expressed in our language by any single term. It combines the ideas of *consolation* and *refreshment of spirit*, with those of *strength* for duty and *readiness* to engage in it. It is quite in the manner of St. Paul to associate himself with believers generally, in his references to the reception of spiritual blessing. The passage just cited from 2 Cor. affords an illustration of this:—“Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ,” &c. The Apostle ever felt that his own soul, as well as

13. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but *“was let hitherto,”*) that I might have some *‘fruit* ||among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

s Rom. xv. 23. *a* See Acts xvi. 7; 1 Thess. ii. 18. *b* Phil. iv. 17.

|| Or, *in you*.

the souls of his people, needed to be refreshed and strengthened with the grace of Christ; and he rejoiced to think of the streams of that grace as flowing forth to all who were in Him.—Nor should we fail to mark, that he here recognises the spiritual advantages of Christian fellowship. He anticipated profit to himself from his intercourse with the Christians at Rome, and the observance of their faith in its living manifestation; while he hoped to be the instrument of strengthening that faith, and deepening their holy principles.

Verse 13. *Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, &c.* In his usual frank and affectionate manner, St. Paul here discloses to the Roman Church the purpose which he had often formed to visit them, but which had hitherto been frustrated by the arrangements of Divine Providence, calling him to other spheres of labour.—It is instructive to observe the confidence with which he anticipated “fruit” of his holy toil, wherever his ministry might be exercised. Seeking, as he did, simply to accomplish Christ’s purposes, by declaring His truth in reliance on the promised aid of His Spirit, he knew that he could not labour in vain. He was assured that the message which he proclaimed would, to some, be actually saving; while his unfolding of the deeper truths of the gospel would edify and establish those who had embraced the

14. 'I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also.

c 1 Cor. ix. 16.

Saviour. There is a peculiar significance in the expression, "that I might have some fruit among you also, *even as among other Gentiles.*" St. Paul regarded himself as specially "the Apostle of the Gentiles;" (xi. 13; Gal. ii. 7, 8;) and his heart naturally turned to the metropolis of the world, where he would have the widest field of toil among those who had been enslaved by idolatry, or misled by the fluctuating systems of Pagan philosophy. This thought he pursues in the two following verses, and then opens the grand theme of his Epistle.

Verses 14, 15. *I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, &c.* The idea which was present to the Apostle's mind in the use of this language, was the *obligation* resting on him, in virtue of his special commission from the Lord Jesus to the Gentiles, to make known the gospel to men of all countries, of all ranks, and of all degrees of intellectual culture. That obligation was not discharged until he had visited every place which was providentially within his reach, to publish the glad tidings of the Crucified One. Conscious of such a mission, his mind might well turn to Rome, with its immense population, and its commanding influence. There the systems of heathen worship existed in their most gorgeous and imposing forms; there, too, philosophy was cultivated; and from that city, the centre of the vast Empire before which every other had fallen, a power went forth which influenced the destinies of almost every people.

16. For 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ : for 'it is the power of God unto salvation to every
d Ps. xl. 9, 10; Mark viii. 38; 2 Tim. i. 8. e 1 Cor. i. 18; xv. 2.

Verse 16. *For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ : for it is the power of God unto salvation, &c.* Here the Apostle, by an easy and natural transition, introduces the theme of his Epistle, and comprehensively states some of those features of the gospel on which he enlarges in his subsequent reasonings. He affirms his own *exulting confidence* in the Christian message. In the anticipation of proclaiming it in the great metropolis of the world, he dwells on it with holy triumph, as that which might well be opposed to the loftiest pretensions of heathenism, and in comparison of which the varied and conflicting speculations of philosophy were utterly powerless. The *reasons* of his glorying in the gospel are compressed into a few brief words, the deep meaning of which it is not easy to bring out. First of all, recognising the impotence of every merely human scheme, and the dependence of man upon God for all real excellence or abiding joy, he speaks of the gospel as "the power of God,"—that system of truth which, and *which alone*, the living energy of God accompanies and applies, so as to rescue man from his guilt and pollution, and raise him to peace and to purity. This, indeed, was the primary ground of the Apostle's confidence, when he went forth, a feeble man, to oppose the gospel of Christ to the systems which then held sway. He felt that God was with him,—that God owned the truth which he proclaimed, and accomplished by means of it, when received in humility and faith, spiritual results which, of themselves, evinced the presence of a Divine power. These results he expresses in one word, "*salvation*,"—thus reminding us that the gospel fully meets the case of man as fallen and guilty,

one that believeth; *f*to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

f Luke ii. 30, 31, 32; xxiv. 47; Acts iii. 26; xiii. 26, 46; Rom. ii. 9.

that it rescues him, upon his embracing its gracious offers, not only from a state of condemnation, but from the bondage of sinful passions, and that it opens to him the glories of a better life beyond the grave.—He adverts, further, to the *one condition* of salvation,—*faith*, considered as directed to Him whom the gospel sets forth as the Refuge of the guilty, and the Source of spiritual life. Such a faith necessarily supposes a consciousness of sin, an earnest desire of salvation, and the renunciation of every other object of confidence and hope. Thus coming to God as unworthy and undone, we embrace His testimony respecting His Son, and rely on the Lord Jesus for acceptance and eternal life. And it was one of the reasons of the Apostle's glorying in the gospel, that it places before us a condition of pardon and purity so *simple*, and so adapted to our state of destitution and ruin.—Still further, St. Paul adverts to the *universality* of the provision which has thus been made for the recovery of man; that to *every one* that believes the Christian message it is the power of God unto salvation. In the very opening of this Epistle, and the first comprehensive statement of its grand theme, he alludes to the precious truth which he afterwards so largely discusses, that under the Christian economy Jews and Gentiles are placed on the same ground, and invited on the same condition to the enjoyment of the same spiritual blessings. To the ancient people of God, indeed, the work of the Lord Jesus, and the offer of salvation through Him, were to be *first* proclaimed. Their position, as the visible Church of God under the former economy, was thus recognised; and the character of

17. For *therein* is the righteousness of God revealed
g Rom. iii. 21.
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Christianity, as a system which presented the accomplishment of the ancient predictions and types, was made prominent. But the very same offers of blessing were to be made to the Gentiles; and henceforth, as the Apostle's words, "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," not obscurely intimate, the Church of God was to be constituted upon a new basis, all being members of it who should truly embrace the Lord Jesus, and stand forth to avow His Name.

Verse 17. *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed.* In these words St. Paul takes up one most important branch of the salvation of which he had just spoken, selecting it as deserving of primary consideration. The first solemn fact, bearing on the state of man, is, that he is guilty before God; and the first aspect of the gospel to which the thoughtful mind should turn is, that it discloses "the righteousness of God." The precise import of this phrase, as it is here employed, has been matter of dispute; but we have only to consider it attentively, and to collate this verse with the similar phraseology of iii. 21, 22, where the subject is more fully unfolded, to apprehend clearly its deep significance. It *cannot* here mean the *attribute* of righteousness as belonging to God Himself. This could not be said to be "from faith;" nor does this idea suit the context. It is *righteousness* considered as *imputed to man*, in opposition to a state of *condemnation*; and it is called "the righteousness of God," as that which is conferred on man according to *the scheme or constitution which God has established*, and which *only He*, as the Moral Governor of the universe, will recognise. This righteousness "*is revealed*" in the gospel. The original word

vealed from faith to faith : as it is written, ^hThe just shall live by faith.

^h Hab. ii. 4 ; John iii. 36 ; Gal. iii. 11 ; Phil. iii. 9 ; Heb. x. 38.

properly expresses the *uncovering* of that which had before been veiled ; and the sentiment of the Apostle—one on which he loved to dwell—is, that the Christian scheme presents the clear and ample disclosure of that plan of grace, emanating from God, which had been partially shadowed forth under former dispensations, but which could not then be distinctly or fully apprehended.

From faith to faith. Of these words, too, several different explanations have been given ; and it is confessedly difficult to decide on the precise idea which the combination of the two phrases, “ from faith,” “ to faith,” is designed to convey, while the general truth affirmed is clear and obvious, that “ the righteousness of God ” is to be realised, on our part, *by faith*. A construction in some respects similar occurs in vi. 19 ; and this, perhaps, should induce us to understand the Apostle as meaning, that in the gospel the righteousness of God which is by faith is revealed *in order to the actual production of that faith*, and thus in order to the attainment of that blessing of which it is the condition.

As it is written, The just shall live by faith. This quotation is taken from Habakkuk ii. 4 :—“ Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him : but the just shall live by his faith.” It is adduced also in Gal. iii. 11, and Heb. x. 38. The words, as cited by the Apostle, may be translated either, “ The just by faith shall live,” or as in our version, “ The just shall live by faith.” But each of these renderings conveys the same leading idea,—that faith in the Divine testimony forms the condition of life and blessing. The Apostle refers to this passage as one of

18. 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven

† Acts xvii. 30; Eph. v. 6; Coloss. iii. 6.

those in the Old Testament, in which the gracious arrangements of the Christian economy were shadowed forth, and the great principle which pervades them was distinctly recognised. The more precise application of this principle, together with the fulness of privilege and blessing to which faith in the Divine testimony, and a reliance on Him whom that testimony sets forth, should lead, was reserved, as the Apostle had just intimated, for the clearer disclosures of the gospel.

Verse 18. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, &c.* This is the first position which the Apostle assumes, in the great argument upon which he now enters, in order to show the transcendent value of the gospel, as revealing the righteousness which God, in accordance with His scheme of grace in Christ, imputes to every believer. He is about to establish the universal *guilt* of man, and to prove that no one, of all the human race, can claim righteousness by the works of the law. And he begins with a proposition which shows how fearful a thing a state of guilt is. He reminds us that there is *wrath* in God,—not the turbulent passion of anger which is often found in men, a selfish irritation which arises from personal annoyance, but the deep, thoughtful, intense displeasure of a holy nature against that which is base and unworthy. Nor is this all. It belongs to God, as the Moral Governor of the universe, to render retribution for human conduct, and thus to maintain and vindicate the principles which are essential to the order and welfare of His creatures. If sin and holiness were treated in the same manner by the great Ruler of all, moral distinctions would be subverted, and universal

against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness ;

anarchy would prevail. But it is not so. "The wrath of God" against sin—the pure unselfish feeling of moral indignation against that which is base and wicked—"is revealed ;" it comes forth into act, influencing the Divine procedures, and disclosing itself in the judgments which, sooner or later, follow sin.—The Apostle uses the remarkable expression, that it "is revealed *from heaven*." The allusion appears to be to heaven as "the throne" of God, the seat of His government ; and the sentiment affirmed is, that the displeasure of God against sin appears in the whole course of His moral administration, as far as it has been placed on record, or as it now passes before our eyes. The very constitution of the human mind is such, that a sense of wrong-doing produces an inward disquiet which may make a man miserable in the midst of scenes of gaiety and pleasure. Every departure from purity, and rectitude, and kindness has a tendency to rob man of true happiness ; while the unchecked indulgence of his passions will not only destroy mental composure, and enfeeble the intellectual powers, but will induce disease and premature death. The remonstrances and upbraidings of conscience, forming, as they do, premonitions of coming woe, are an evidence of the displeasure with which He who has made the mind regards sin. The whole history of the Divine dispensations towards this world—the history, in particular, of God's dealings with that people whom He selected from the mass of mankind, to bring them into a most intimate relation to Himself—attests His anger against sin ; while the declarations of His inspired word affirm this truth, and place it beyond a doubt.

In speaking of *that* against which the righteous dis-

pleasure of God is directed, the Apostle recognises a familiar classification of our duties. The most complete classification, indeed, is that which he suggests in his Epistle to Titus, where he distributes them under the heads of *godliness*, *righteousness*, and *sobriety*. Here he adverts to the first and second of these divisions. "Ungodliness" comprehends those sins which are more immediately directed against God Himself,—and, in particular, the careless disregard of His government, and the want of the dispositions which we should cherish towards Him; while "unrighteousness" applies to all violations of our duty to our fellow-men. But these distinctions, valuable as they are, must not be too closely pressed. All sins are, in an important sense, sins against God, since they are in direct opposition to His commands, and involve the perversion of our nature to purposes opposed to those for which it has been given to us. And the term "unrighteousness" is immediately afterwards used by the Apostle in a more comprehensive sense;—"*who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*" This clause suggests a sentiment of great importance to his argument. The ground of the condemnation of men is, that they resist the truth that is made known to them, instead of following its light,—that they do violence to the convictions of duty which are again and again pressed upon their conscience; and that they do this through the cherished love of sin. It is generally agreed that the word employed by St. Paul should be rendered "hold back," "hinder," or "restrain;" and his statement, as thus understood, forcibly describes the character and conduct of ungodly men. They *counteract* and *resist* the truth, instead of allowing it to call forth the emotions and efforts which it tends to produce, and surrendering their whole nature to its control. Thus they deprive it of its power, and stand chargeable with a guilty rejection of the authority of God.

19. Because ^kthat which may be known of God is manifest || in them; for ^lGod hath shewed *it* unto them.

20. For ^mthe invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood

^k Acts xiv. 17. || Or, *to them*. ^l John i. 9. ^m Psalm xix. 1, &c.;
Acts xiv. 17; and xvii. 27.

Verses 19, 20. *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him, &c.* St. Paul now enters upon the application of the principle which he had just affirmed to the case of the Gentile world. As he looked around upon that world, he perceived some elements of truth, and some convictions of right; but he saw that multitudes, even in the most polished countries, where literature and art were cultivated, and where the speculations of philosophy were pursued with avidity, had resisted the truth which they possessed, until it had lost all its power over their minds,—that they had thus become a prey to various forms of error and delusion,—and that they had so repeatedly set at nought their convictions of duty, that their hearts had become utterly callous and sensual; and, being judicially abandoned by God, they had given themselves up to the most revolting excesses. It is instructive and admonitory to trace the process of increasing and deepening iniquity which the Apostle here presents to us.

To show that the idolatry and corruption of the heathen world did not originate in the absence of religious light, but in the refusal of the heart to welcome and follow that light, St. Paul adverts to the fact, that *all men everywhere are encircled with proofs of the being and perfections of God*. This is the topic of the two verses which we are now considering. It has been properly remarked, that the

by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead;|| so that they are without excuse :

|| Or, *that they may be.*

phrase which we render "that which may be known of God" must not be understood as implying the whole compass of truth respecting God which it is possible for the devout mind to apprehend; but, rather, that *general* objective knowledge of God, as an Eternal and Almighty Being, the Author and Ruler of the visible universe, which the works of nature, with their beautiful adaptations, suggest to every reflective mind. 'That phrase might, indeed, have been more literally rendered, "that which is known of God." There is a peculiar propriety, too, in the expression which St. Paul selects, "is manifest *in them.*" It seems to suggest the idea, that the *constitution* of the *human mind* is such that, if it thoughtfully ponders the evidences of a designing Mind in the works of nature, and more especially if it collates them with the intimations of conscience, — that principle within us which responds to the distinctions of right and wrong,—it cannot but have the impression that there is an intelligent Maker and Ruler of all things. From the period of the creation of the world, the Apostle goes on to affirm, God has thus manifested Himself as the Eternal and Almighty One, and as possessed of Divine majesty and glory, raised by His very nature and perfections above every other being, and ruling over all, though to us invisible. But we must not press his argument beyond its proper limits. He does not contend that the human mind could, apart from a direct revelation, have attained to an accurate knowledge of the Divine character, and of the principles and laws of the Divine government. He speaks only of the *general intimations* which the works of nature afford to the mind

21. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *Him* not as God, neither were thankful; but ^{*}became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

* 2 Kings xvii. 15; Jer. ii. 5; Ephes. iv. 17, 18.

that is willing to reflect on them, and prepared to welcome the truth which they suggest. We know that God revealed Himself to the first members of the human family; and again and again, during the patriarchal age, He condescended to come into intercourse with some of our race, to issue positive precepts, and to cheer the drooping heart with promises of grace. The light of the earlier revelation might have been cherished by the whole family of man; and it did, in fact, linger, even amidst the darkness and error with which human pride and passion too often obscured it. But, besides this, God has provided that in every age men should be surrounded with evidences of "His eternal power" and Divine majesty,—*"the things that are made,"* in all their wondrous variety, and beauty, and grandeur, and with their minute and exquisite adaptations, proclaiming Him who formed them, so as to leave all who turn away from Him *"without excuse."*

Verse 21. *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain, &c.* Here the Apostle accounts for the origin of idolatry, and of the fearful errors that overspread the ancient Gentile world; pointing out, at the same time, the ground of the condemnation of individual men living in his own day. His words embody the important principle,—*that the refusal of the heart to submit to God, and gratefully to acknowledge Him, lays the mind open to the intrusion of error, and that, as this process goes on, error may be even welcomed.* Several of the expressions which

22. *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

o Jer. x. 14.

he uses are highly suggestive. How full of truth, for instance, are the words which indicate our duty to God! We are "*to glorify Him as God*,"—to bow before Him with lowly adoration,—to gaze with mingled reverence and delight upon His perfections, as He has unfolded them to us,—to "feel after Him" in the earnest exercises of our spirits, if by any means we may enjoy His friendship, and be assimilated to His character,—and to engage with readiness and constancy in His service, instantly turning away from everything which is offensive to Him. And we are to be "*thankful*." For we are encircled with the proofs of His care. Even where the light of revelation shone not, God "left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave men rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." And God claims our gratitude. He calls upon us to trace His hand, and to acknowledge from our hearts the outflowing of His kindness towards us. But the Gentiles turned away from Him, and "became vain in their imaginations." Many of them cultivated the intellect, and took pleasure in philosophical speculations and discussions; but these speculations were foolish and misleading. The soul was not attracted to the Centre of all truth, and hence it became a prey to error and to vice. Ceasing to apprehend God, their "heart"—their whole inner man—"was darkened." Gradually the light which they possessed faded away; and they were left bewildered amidst the errors which they had chosen.

Verses 22, 23. *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God*

23. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible
 God into an image made like to corruptible man, and
 to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

p Dent. iv. 16, &c.; Ps. cvi. 20; Isa. xl. 18, 25; Jer. ii. 11;
 Ezek. viii. 10; Acts xvii. 29.

into an image, &c. Another feature of the case of the heathen world, as it existed in the Apostle's day, is here brought in. *Intellectual pride* insinuated itself into many minds that turned away from God, and sought not to glorify Him. Disregarding the evidences of an Almighty Maker and Ruler of the world, which presented themselves on every hand, and unwilling to bow to His authority with lowly reverence, men pursued subtle investigations, and gloried in their own sagacity and wisdom: but, even thus, they sank down into folly, and worshipped, as emblems and forms of the Divine, images which they themselves had made. Polytheism, which among the masses of the heathen world was gross and debasing indeed, became, perhaps, a little more refined on the part of the philosophers of Greece and Rome; but even their boasted wisdom did not keep them from acknowledging the national divinities, and engaging in the national religious rites.—Again we have to mark the deep significance of several of the terms which the Apostle uses. He speaks of “the glory of the *uncorruptible* God,”—thus reminding us that the Divine nature is incapable of waste or decay,—that an imperishable life, a life essentially its own, pervades it,—and that it thus possesses a glory distinct from that of every creature. To attribute to the Godhead, therefore, a resemblance to “*corruptible* man,” and still more to any of the inferior creatures of this earth, is the height of folly. The body of man, as it exists in this world, is liable to change and decay; it is doomed to lose its loveliness, and to fall

24. 'Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, 'to dishonour their own bodies 'between themselves :

25. Who changed 'the truth of God *into a lie, and

q. Ps. lxxxi. 12 ; Acts vii. 42 ; Ephes. iv. 18, 19 ; 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

r 1 Cor. vi. 18 ; 1 Thess. iv. 4 ; 1 Peter iv. 3.

s Lev. xviii. 22. t 1 Thess. i. 9 ; 1 John v. 20.

u Isa. xlv. 20 ; Jer. x. 14 ; xiii. 25 ; Amos ii. 4.

under the stroke of death. No earthly form can correctly represent Him who is a Spirit, and from whom life emanates to every thing that lives, while His unseen power upholds and regulates the universal frame of nature.

Verse 24. *Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, &c.* This verse introduces the last step of the process of moral darkening and ruin which the Apostle has been tracing. It is a solemn and affecting thought, that if sin is loved and cherished, and if error is loved because it favours sin, then there comes in, at length, a *judicial abandonment of men by God to the sinful passions which they have indulged, and the errors which they have chosen.* Even in the most polished cities of the ancient heathen world, where literature and art exerted their softening influence, profligacy of the most awful kind, and assuming even unnatural forms, prevailed, dishonouring man's nature, and diffusing suffering, disease, and death. The literature of this period affords only too many illustrations of the vices to which the Apostle alludes, and fully confirms his statements in verses 26, 27. The rejection of the authority of God, and the lofty arrogance which claimed superior wisdom, were thus followed by a judicial blindness and abandonment, which plunged men into the depths of moral degradation.

worshipped and served the creature ||more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

|| Or, *rather*.

Verse 25. *Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.* Here the ground of the judicial abandonment of which St. Paul had just spoken is affirmed. The first clause implies, that the persons referred to had voluntarily closed their eyes against the truth respecting God which they might have known, and had surrendered themselves to false systems,—systems which they themselves did not cordially believe. And thus, renouncing all high and pure religious principle, they offered religious homage, and even formal worship with sacrifices and offerings, (for such is the import respectively of the two words which we render “worshipped” and “served,”) to the creature, while the Unseen Creator of all things was passed by or rejected. The adoration paid to the Roman Emperors may be referred to as one illustration of the Apostle’s statement. Dr. Merivale, in his “History of the Romans under the Empire,” (vol. iii., p. 409,) thus speaks of the introduction of this practice under Augustus; and his remarks illustrate the truth which the Apostle makes so prominent,—that men adopted this practice in opposition to their inmost convictions of truth and rectitude. “The Romans heard without dismay that their patron and preserver had permitted the people of Ephesus and Nicæa to erect temples in honour of the associated deities of Rome and Julius, and even that he had enjoined Roman citizens abroad to pay them Divine honours. They noticed with complacency, that he had restricted the worship of himself alone to Greeks and Asiatics; but the extravagance of flattery soon

26. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature :

a Lev. xviii. 22, 23 ; Ephes. v. 12 ; Jude 10.

subdued all remaining scruples. Philosophy and morality were impotent to resist ; and the pride of equality, the last barrier of reason, gave way before the acknowledged supremacy of a living mortal." The same eloquent historian, as he traces the course of events under succeeding emperors, shows the appalling extent to which the worship of the chiefs of the state and their acknowledged favourites was carried. When Sejanus stood high in the favour of Tiberius, " games and holidays were voted in his honour, and before his images or pictures altars were raised, vows conceived, and sacrifices offered." (Vol. v., p. 282.) As the youthful emperor, Caius Caligula, headed the funeral procession which conveyed the remains of Tiberius to Rome, the enthusiasm of the people converted the occasion into one of triumph rather than of mourning. " They streamed forth from the towns in the way, and from the city itself, to meet him ; and along the roadside altars were decked for sacrifice, and steamed with incense ; torches blazed and flowers were strewn in profusion before him." (Vol. v., p. 369.) Nor was it long before the vain and licentious Caius distinctly claimed to be worshipped as a god, and even as holding pre-eminence among the deities ; and the readiness with which the Romans acquiesced in these pretensions shows their deep moral degradation. Dr. Merivale remarks, " The Divine honours paid to so many of his race, and the regular form which the Cæsar-worship was assuming amidst the ruins of ancient rituals, made a lively impression on the imagination of the excitable Caius. When eleven cities of Asia contended before the senate for the honour of

27. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

28. And even as they did not like ||to retain God

|| Or, *to acknowledge*.

devoting themselves to the worship of Tiberius, the claims of Miletus and Ephesus had been rejected because they were too deeply engaged in the service of Apollo and Diana. The cult of the Emperor, they were given to understand, wherever it was established, ought to precede every local religion; or rather his worshippers ought to divide their vows and sacrifices with no other patron. The principle thus gravely asserted Cain carried out without compunction. He aspired not only to be recognised as a god, but claimed the same pre-eminence among the gods as he enjoyed without a rival among human potentates. . . . He asserted that the worship of the Cæsar was paramount, throughout the world, to every other formula of religious devotion." (Vol. v., pp. 404-5.)

Who is blessed for ever. Amen. This ascription of praise to the true and living God was called forth by the Apostle's indignation at the dishonour done to Him by the idolatry of the nations. Jehovah, the Creator and Upholder of all things, is the *one* Object of adoration; and to Him the ceaseless praises of all holy intelligences shall ascend throughout eternity. When every system that has opposed His authority, and insulted His majesty, shall be swept away, and when all creatures to whom Divine honours have been paid shall be revealed as vain and powerless, He shall be acknowledged, with ever-increasing gratitude and reverence, as the Source of blessing, and the Object of delight and trust.

in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to || a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

29. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

|| Or, a mind void of judgment. y Ephes. v. 4.

Verse 28. *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, &c.* Having illustrated, in the two preceding verses, the depth of profligacy and even the unnatural vices into which many of the heathen of his own day, though polished and refined, had sunk, the Apostle here resumes his assertion of God's judicial abandonment, as the fitting recompense of their guilty rejection of Him. There is a correspondence between the leading terms in the two clauses, which our version fails to express. Dean Alford suggests that it might be indicated by the translation, "Because they reprobated the knowledge of God, God gave them over to a reprobate mind;" and he adds, "This is, indeed, a very inadequate, but, as far as the *form* is concerned, an *accurate* representation of it." It is a fearful thing when God leaves men to the unchecked dominion of the evil passions which they have indulged, His Spirit ceasing to strive with them, and the reproofs of conscience becoming fainter and yet fainter. Then sin has the perfect mastery of their whole being; and their evil tendencies, hardened by repeated resistance to the truth, hurry them into acts which destroy their own peace, and imperil the dearest interests of society.

Verses 29—31. *Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of*

30. Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

31. Without understanding, covenant-breakers, || without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful :

|| Or, *unsociable*.

envy, &c. Here we have a fearful catalogue of the vices which degraded the ancient Gentile world. The first term has probably the import of *injustice*. The second is wanting in some of the best and oldest MSS., and is excluded from the text of the most valued critical editions. The third term, "wickedness," expresses a temper which is prone to all evil. The word which we render "debate" conveys the idea of *cunning* or *guile*. There is an obvious distinction between the words "whisperers" and "backbiters." The former denotes the *secret insinuation* of evil against men ; while the latter is equivalent to *open slanderers*. Among the other terms which the Apostle employs, it will suffice to notice that which we render "without understanding." This refers specially to *moral discernment* ; and it implies that, through the indulgence of sinful passions, the perception of moral distinctions was impaired, and the mind seemed even to have lost its aptitude for the reception of spiritual truth. But what an appalling state of things is that described in these verses ! Real and pure affection—the kindness that seeks the true welfare of others—is banished ; high and noble principle disappears ; self-control, so essential to excellence of character, is lost ; and the minds of men, regardless of the strongest and tenderest claims, unmoved by the recollection of benefits received, are abandoned to the tyranny of selfish, malignant, licentious passions.

32. Who ^aknowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things ^aare worthy of death, not only do the same, but || ^bhave pleasure in them that do them.

^a Rom. ii. 2.

^a Rom. vi. 21.

|| Or, *consent with them.*

^b Psalm l. 18; Hos. vii. 3.

Verse 32. *Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things &c.* This is the crowning feature of matured vice. St. Paul, in effect, affirms, that many among the heathen, though aware that the principles and acts referred to must end in ruin, according to the righteous judgment of God, not only themselves persisted in them, but took complacency in others who did so. Beyond this vice can scarcely go. It is bad enough for a man to be hurried away by his passions, when strongly excited, into forms of evil of which, in his better moments, he disapproves. But for a man not only to give way to sin, but deliberately and habitually to commit it, and even to *delight* in those who practise iniquity, and that *because* they do so practise it,—this implies an utter estrangement of the heart from every thing that is good and hopeful.

CHAPTER II.

1. THEREFORE thou art ^ainexcusable, O man, who-soever thou art that judgest: ^bfor wherein thou

^a Rom. i. 20.

^b 2 Sam. xii. 5, 6, 7; Matt. vii. 1, 2; John viii. 9.

CHAPTER II.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

HAVING dwelt, in the preceding chapter, on the sinfulness and pollution of the Gentile world, St. Paul now turns to the state and position of the Jewish people, as one of condemnation and exposure to the wrath of God. The transition, however, is not abrupt. The Apostle prefaces his *special* and *direct* remonstrance with the race of Israel by a *general* appeal to *every man* who, possessing the truth of God, but himself practising iniquity, pronounced judgment on the idolatry and the vices of the heathen. This appeal leads him onward to affirm some great principles bearing on the *moral administration of God*. He contends, in particular, that every man will be dealt with according to *his own character and conduct*; and he affirms the strict *impartiality* of God in all His *judicial acts*. Then, at length, he expostulates with his brethren according to the flesh, who gloried in their religious privileges, who exulted more especially in that revelation from God which raised them so far above the vain speculations and debasing superstitions of the heathen world, but who did not themselves submit to the restraints of the law, nor endeavour, in all things, to please God. He shows the utter fallacy of the hopes which many of the Jews of his day cherished, that their relation to Abraham,—their position as God's cove-

judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

2. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

nant-people,—their acquaintance with the truth of God, and their firm maintenance of it in opposition to the errors of the heathen,—would insure their eternal safety, although they should live in the practice of sin. This branch of his argument he closes with the principle, that he only was a Jew, in the highest and best sense, so as to be entitled to the privileges of God's covenant-people, whose heart was devoted to God, and who habitually cultivated and manifested holy principles.

Verse 1. *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: &c.* This method of introducing the subject of this chapter beautifully illustrates the combined delicacy and fidelity of St. Paul's reasonings with the race of Israel. They were pre-eminently the persons who condemned the heathen, and who, at times, spoke of them with scorn as "sinners of the Gentiles." But the Apostle does not, as yet, name them. He affirms, rather, a general principle,—that any man who condemns the sins of others, while he himself is guilty of similar offences, does, in fact, pass sentence on himself, and cuts himself off from all defence or excuse. No assertion of the truth, no assumed zeal for the interests of morality, can extenuate the guilt of any man who does not himself bow to its requirements, and seek to exemplify its principles.

Verse 2. *But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.*

3. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God ? ~

Here, by a natural transition, the Apostle passes to the solemn fact, that there is One to whom judgment belongs, One who will not allow sin to pass without retribution, and all whose judicial decisions are in perfect accordance with truth. Such a transition is quite in the manner of St. Paul, while it is required by the course of his argument. His reverent and devout mind never lost sight of the fact, that the estimate of character which man may form is of little consequence, in comparison of the decision of Him who rules the universe, and whose judgment is conclusive and final. (See 1 Cor. iv. 3—5.) And he lays stress on the consideration, that “the judgment of God is according to truth.” No personal predilections—no favouritism—can, for a moment, influence that judgment. The judicial sentence of God is ever determined by a faithful application of definite principles to individual cases. In the consciousness of accountability to Him, and the anticipation of His judgment, we should, therefore, never proudly condemn others,—though we may be called upon to denounce their sin,—but should look into our own hearts, seeking to have their evils corrected, and should apply ourselves with diligence and earnestness to the discharge of every duty.

Verse 3. *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, &c.* The Apostle proceeds, in this verse, to rebuke the thoughtlessness or presumption which could lead a man who himself practised the iniquities that he condemned in others, to expect that he should, on some ground, escape the condemnation of God. This appeal follows naturally from the principle just affirmed,

4. Or despisest thou 'the riches of His goodness, and 'forbearance, and 'longsuffering; 'not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ?

c Rom. ix. 23 ; Ephes. i. 7 ; ii. 4, 7. *d* Rom. iii. 25.

e Exod. xxxiv. 6. *f* Isa. xxx. 18 ; 2 Peter iii. 9, 15.

that we are *all* living under a moral administration exercised by One who cannot overlook any of His creatures, who cannot be ignorant of their real character, and whose estimate of that character is in accordance with the strictest truth. It was a vain imagination of some of the Jews, that the fact of their relation to Abraham, and the special religious advantages conferred on them as a people, would insure their safety when the awards of this probationary life should be given. It was this delusive idea which John the Baptist reproved in his earnest remonstrance, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

Verse 4. *Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering; not knowing &c.* Another thought is here brought forward. In the present state, judgment lingers. The threatened penalty of sin is not at once inflicted; there is a period of forbearance, in which God bestows upon sinful men the bounties of His providence, visits them with the drawings of His grace, and calls upon them to turn away from the path of evil. But the tendency of our depraved heart is, to abuse this longsuffering of God. The imagination is sometimes cherished, that God is indifferent to our character and conduct, and that He will, at the last, deal very leniently with our sins. But this, the Apostle reminds us, is to insult God, and to disregard the great purpose of his long-

5. But after thy hardness and impenitent heart
treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of

g Deut. xxxii. 34; James v. 3.

suffering. It is to "*despise* the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering." Well may St. Paul speak of "*the riches*" of the Divine forbearance! If, for a moment, we suppose the purest and kindest of men to have been entrusted with the high and awful prerogative of rendering retribution for human conduct, and then cast our eyes on the bold impiety, the glaring injustice, the cold-hearted selfishness, and the brutal violence, which so often afflict our earth,—not to speak of secret and subtle sins which imply utter alienation from good,—doubtless, in many cases, the forbearance of such a man would have given way, and the stroke of deserved vengeance would have fallen. But God delays that stroke, and extends long-suffering! If, however, man perversely regards this long-suffering as an intimation that God cares little about sin, he treats it, in effect, with *contempt*. Even in nature, and in the dispensations of Providence, there are sufficient indications that sin is the object of the unchanging displeasure of God; and a thoughtful consideration of His forbearance, in connection with the admonitions of conscience, would show that that forbearance is directed to a very different end,—that it is designed to afford men space to repent, and to induce them, by a regard to the mercy, as well as to the righteous judgment, of God, to turn away from the path of evil.

Verse 5. *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath &c.* The fearful position and prospects of those who abuse the long-suffering of God are here set forth. Their moral state becomes one of

wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God ;

confirmed depravity. Instead of being affected and softened by the display of the Divine goodness, their heart is hardened. It refuses to admit those feelings of self-abasement and remorse, and those desires of a better and purer state, which God seeks to awaken ; and being thus "impenitent,"—not only destitute of repentance, but *refusing to repent*,—it is rapidly becoming ripe for judgment. For the period of forbearance, the Apostle goes on to say, if it is thus abused, becomes one in which the sinner is *accumulating* wrath for himself,—the penalty of reiterated and aggravated sin being *in reserve* until that day when God will apply judicially the principles of His government. That day is spoken of as "the day of *wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*" It is the period when that fixed and intense displeasure against sin which fills the Divine mind (i. 18) will be fully manifested ; and when the great principle of *retribution* will be applied to the varying characters of men, and the perfect rectitude of the whole administration of God will be brought out. In the present state clouds and darkness often rest upon that administration ; mysteries, insoluble by human reason, attach to the ways of God ; but the day is coming, when every cloud will be dispelled, and the judicial procedures of God will stand *revealed* to angels and men, as characterised by *perfect righteousness*. The apparent inequalities of the Divine government in the present life will then be adjusted ; and from the lips of all the devout and pure among God's creatures will be heard the anthem of lowly adoration, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."

6. ^aWho will render to every man according to his deeds :

h Job xxxiv. 11 ; Ps. lxii. 12 ; Prov. xxiv. 12 ; Jer. xvii. 10 ; xxxii. 19 ; Matt. xvi. 27 ; Rom. xiv. 12 ; 1 Cor. iii. 8 ; 2 Cor. v. 10 ; Rev. ii. 23 ; xx. 12 ; xxii. 12.

Verse. 6. *Who will render to every man according to his deeds.* In these words the Apostle amplifies the thought which he had briefly expressed by the term *δικαιοκρισία*, "righteous judgment," in the preceding verse. God will deal with men, he affirms, on the principle of *retribution*,—for that is the import of the word *ἀποδώσει*, "will render." This retribution, too, will be dealt out to men as *individuals*. We shall not be judged as having belonged to certain communities, or as having stood in certain outward relations to God's visible Church, so as to be shielded by the privileges belonging to the Church generally : each of us must, for himself, undergo the Divine scrutiny, and receive a fitting recompense. God "will render to every man"—to each individual—"according to his deeds," or rather, "according to his *works*." This last clause completes the Apostle's statement. *Personal character and conduct* will form the ground of the Divine award. The term "*works*" must obviously be taken in its most extensive sense, as including acts of the mind, and settled habits,—the *principles* of character, voluntarily cherished and maintained,—as well as the practical development of these principles in the outward life. The whole course of the Apostle's reasoning shows this ; and in the impressive statement with which he winds up this chapter, he affirms, that God's estimate of character has respect to the state of the heart, and that it is only as our outward conduct is the manifestation of inward purity that it can meet with the

7. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life :

Divine approval. There is, indeed, an important sense in which faith in the Lord Jesus is itself *a work*. When the question was put to our Lord, on one occasion, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" He replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." This consideration, however, is alleged, not to intimate that it was now specially present to the Apostle's mind, but only to show, that any exposition which would restrict the term "works" to outward actions would be most defective and misleading. St. Paul is here affirming a *general principle* relative to the Divine government. That government, he teaches us, is one of retribution,—retribution to be rendered to each individual according to his own character and conduct; and he lingers on the thought that, when the day of retribution comes, the perfect rectitude and equity of all God's judicial decisions will be revealed to the intelligent universe.

Verse 7. *To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, &c.* In this and the three following verses, St. Paul states, in *general terms*, *what it is* to which the Divine estimate of character will have respect, and which will influence and govern the Divine decision respecting individual men. He fixes, first of all, upon the leading elements of a *pious* character, as it might be developed under various dispensations, and with very different degrees of religious light. A man, following the gracious leadings of God, and repenting of his ingratitude and sin, (verse 4,) *strives to do that which is good, and perseveres* in a course of upright and benevolent effort, notwithstanding

every inducement to forsake it. And this course of "well-doing" is prompted partly by a *desire of the lofty, spiritual, undying pleasures* which are to be realised in a higher state, where God will Himself reward and honour the soul that has devoutly sought Him, and has been intent both on the enjoyment of His friendship, and on a course of obedience to His will. Every such character "*obeys the truth*:" (verse 8:) he welcomes its light, bows to its injunctions, and follows its guidance. The *degree* in which the truth of God is disclosed necessarily varies under different dispensations, and varies, indeed, in the case of individual men living under the same dispensation: but the Apostle's words imply, that all who will be finally approved must be distinguished by the one grand feature of character,—that, instead of resisting the truth, through the cherished love of sin, (i. 18,) they surrender their hearts to its power, seek the blessings which it holds forth, and strive to walk in the path of duty. The course of the argument required St. Paul *here* to state this principle in *the most general terms*. He glances, indeed, in some of the verses which follow (verses 12—15) at its particular application to the case of those who were destitute of the written revelation, and to that of those who exulted in the possession of the law; but here he presents it in a form equally applicable to both. He lays down, as we have seen, *the general rule of the Divine judicial procedure*; and, leaving it to the infinite wisdom, and the unerring discrimination, of the Eternal One, to apply that rule to individual cases, he affirms that they only will be admitted to life and blessedness, who have been characterised by the love of the truth, as far as they possessed it, and by submission to its dictates,—by a practical regard to duty,—by perseverance in obedience,—and by a preference of spiritual good to that which is low and sensual.

8. But unto them that are contentious, and 'do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

9. Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of

‡ Job xxiv. 13; Rom. i. 18; 2 Thess. i. 8.

Verses 8, 9. *But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, &c.* These verses bring before us the features of character which incur the Divine displeasure, and which will lead to the rejection of men in the great day of retribution. They contain an expansion of the sentiment which St. Paul had affirmed in i. 18, while they present a contrast to the principles and moral habits which he had just indicated as distinguishing those who will be at last approved. Some modern expositors, and among them Dean Alford, consider that the word *ἐπιθεία*, which we render "contention," rather means "*self-seeking*," and that it stands opposed to the "patient continuance in well-doing" before mentioned, which requires self-denial and forbearance. The sentiment thus brought out is, indeed, a weighty and important one,—that one of the leading characteristics of almost every man who turns away from God is, that he makes *himself* the great object of regard, and seeks his own glory, or wealth, or pleasure, as the first object of life. But we may well pause before we abandon the older rendering of this term, which is so strikingly appropriate to the general course of thought in this verse. The very first element of character in those who will be finally condemned is *perverse resistance to the authority of God*. In this sense they are "*of contention*," (*ἐξ ἐπιθείας*), or "*contentious*." They refuse to bow to those intimations of the Divine will which have been given to them,

man that doeth evil, of the Jew ^{*}first, and also of the ^{*}Gentile;

10. 'But glory, honour, and peace, to every man

ℓ Amos iii. 2; Luke xii. 47, 48; 1 Peter iv. 17. * Gr. *Greek*.
 ℓ 1 Peter i. 7.

and to sacrifice their own inclinations to the requirements of the Most High. They are ready to contest every point with their Maker; to demand why they should be restrained from this or that indulgence to which their passions prompt them, and subjected to so strict a course of discipline as a life of piety and virtue involves. Cherishing this temper of mind, they "*do not obey the truth*:" they refuse to follow its guidance, to revere its precepts, and to seek the blessings which it announces. In whatever degree the light of truth falls upon their minds, it is practically unheeded. They resist and counteract the truth; and, doing so, they *give themselves up to iniquity*. They "*obey unrighteousness*:" they are the willing servants of sin, and are hurried onward in a course of transgression by their ungodly tendencies. And they "*do evil*:" they *practise* that which is *wrong* and *morally base*, rejecting the just claims of God, and in too many instances trampling on the rights of their fellows. On such characters, whether Jews or Gentiles, there will fall, at length, "indignation and wrath;" and when they reach the close of their probation, and still more when the moral history of this world is wound up, and the Lord Jesus sits enthroned as the final Judge, (verse 16,) they will experience "tribulation and anguish," such as no words can properly express.

Verse 10. *But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, &c.* Here the Apostle resumes the sentiment of verse 7, enlarging on the blessedness and honour

that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the *Gentile :

11. For *there is no respect of persons with God.

* Gr. *Greek*.

m Deut. x. 17 ; 2 Chron. xix. 7 ; Job xxxiv. 19 ; Acts x. 34 ; Gal. ii. 6 ;
Ephes. vi. 9 ; Col. iii. 25 ; 1 Peter i. 17.

to be at last conferred on the devout and obedient. In the day when the results of our probation shall be manifested, the soul that has "obeyed the truth," and, attracted by the friendship of God, has uniformly sought to "do" that which is right and "good," shall be openly acknowledged by Him, invested with unutterable *glory*, and filled with a deep and holy *peace* which nothing shall ever disturb.

Verse 11. *For there is no respect of persons with God.* This great and momentous truth had been, in effect, affirmed in verse 6, where the Apostle had declared that God "will render to every man *according to his works*." But the manner in which he had just closed his statement of the coming retribution,—“to the Jew first, and also to the Greek,”—leads him to bring out into special *prominence* the strict *impartiality* of God. This, indeed, was the great principle with which he was about to meet and overthrow the fond imagination of many of the Jewish people, that their relation to Abraham,—their outward introduction to the covenant of God by the rite of circumcision,—their possession of the ceremonial law, and observance of its rites,—and their open confession of Jehovah's name in the face of the heathen, would secure them from eternal rejection. In opposition to these views, St. Paul was about to affirm, that it is not the *possession* of religious advantages, but the *right* and *faithful use* of them,—that it is not the *knowledge* of the truth, and the *assertion* of it before others,

12. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law : and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law ;

but a *personal conformity* to its requirements, and *obedience* to its precepts,—by which the character of men is to be estimated ; and he lays it down as a most certain and momentous axiom, that in the *judicial decisions* of God there can be *no favouritism*, but that everything will be determined by the application of great principles, and that application just, equal, and unerring. This verse, accordingly, while it forms the fitting close of the preceding remarks, forms also the natural introduction to those which follow, in which the Apostle adverts to the different circumstances of the Jews and the Gentiles, and pleads with the former as to the fallacy of those hopes which rested on their peculiar position and privileges.

Verse 12. *For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law : and as many &c.* There can be no question, that the phrase “without law” refers here to *the written revelation*, and defines the position of the Gentiles as being destitute of it. The whole course of the Apostle’s argument shows this. He is enlarging on the sentiment which he had advanced in the words, “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek ;” and he is showing how the possession or want of the written law will bear upon the judgment of the last day and its solemn issues. Besides, in the remarks which follow, (verses 14, 15,) he implies that the Gentiles were under *a law* to which their conscience, in some degree at least, responded, and the sanctions of which it enforced. The position, then, which he now takes is, that they who have *perversely resisted God*, refused to obey the truth which they possessed, and surrendered themselves to the practice of iniquity, (verses 8,

13. (For *not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

n Matt. vii. 21; James i. 22, 23, 25.

9,) though destitute of the explicit revelation which God gave to Israel, will be condemned and "*perish*:" they will be involved in the hopeless and everlasting ruin threatened against impenitent transgressors. They, on the other hand, who have pursued a similar course of disobedience and vice, while possessed of "the law," will "be judged by the law:" their character will be estimated, and their destiny fixed, with a direct reference to those clear announcements of duty, and those ample developments of the Divine character and government, with which they were favoured. —In the exposition now given of the words, "As many as have sinned," we are only recognising those considerations on which St. Paul has laid stress in this very argument, and keeping in view the fact to which he had referred in verse 4, that mankind are now placed under an economy of *forbearance* and *grace*, designed to lead them to *repentance*. All sin, doubtless, exposes man to rejection and ruin; but if we would enter fully into St. Paul's views, we must by no means lose sight of this last consideration. The brief and comprehensive term "sinned" might well recall to the mind of the thoughtful reader the general course of his preceding remarks.

Verse 13. *For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.* Here, again, we have a general principle, urged, however, with a special reference to the vain imagination of the Jews, that their possession and knowledge of the law, with their other religious privileges, would secure their final acceptance, even although they openly violated the Divine precepts.

14. For when the Gentiles, which have not the

In opposition to this view, the Apostle affirms, that the Divine government can never recognise a *mere acquaintance* with the law as a ground of approval, but requires *practical obedience* to it. This we take to be the *one* sentiment which St. Paul here advances. Nor is there any inconsistency between this sentiment and the solemn truth which he afterwards affirms, that on the ground of strict obedience to the law no flesh can be justified before God. The assertion of the principle now before us was necessary to cut away the false props on which the confidence of many of the Jews rested. It formed an essential element in the great argument by which St. Paul sought to bring about the result, that "every mouth should be stopped," and Jews as well as Gentiles should fall before God in the confession of exposure to merited condemnation. Indeed, the *fundamental* principle which lies at the basis of the Apostle's remark, holds in relation to the Divine government as it is now *modified* by the economy of grace in Christ. That economy requires, as the condition of our acceptance, not a mere knowledge and theoretical acceptance of the truth that relates to the Lord Jesus, but an actual closure with Him as our Saviour and our Lord,—the reliance of the heart on His perfect sacrifice, and the unreserved surrender of ourselves to His government and service. Nor is this all. While the believer is accepted solely for the sake of the mediatorial righteousness and perfect sacrifice of the Redeemer, he is accepted *in order to obedience*. And amidst the revelations of the last day it will be made apparent, that all who truly believed in Jesus became "new creatures" in Him, and thus "had their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Verses 14, 15. *For when the Gentiles, which have not*

law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves :

15. Which show the work of the law written in

the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, &c. These verses suggest some important truths. St. Paul distinctly recognises the actings of *conscience*,—that faculty which responds to the distinctions of right and wrong, forming an indubitable evidence, in the human breast itself, of the reality of those distinctions, and affording a presage of the final retribution to be rendered for human conduct, by the calm pleasure which follows right and benevolent actions, especially if they have involved not only self-control but self-denial, and by the inward condemnation which follows the violation of known duty.—The terms used in the original are chosen with the greatest precision, so as to shut out a possible perversion of this great truth, or an exaggerated statement of it. The expression, *τὰ τοῦ νόμου*, (verse 14,) does not necessarily mean more than “things pertaining to the law,” or “things enjoined in the law;” so that the case which the Apostle supposes is not that of a Gentile observing *everything* that the law requires, and maintaining a course of *perfect* obedience, but rather that of a Gentile complying with *particular precepts*, and avoiding great evils against which conscience would loudly protest. His words, then, do not imply the *sufficiency* of conscience even for *all* the purposes of moral illumination—to say nothing of the higher purposes of justification and inward renewal—for which a revelation is necessary.—The word *φύσει*, “by nature,” is used, we conceive, to indicate *the absence of external religious culture*, and to mark the partial obedience referred to as the result of the dictates of conscience acting within.—A degree of obscurity rests

their hearts, ||their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the ||mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

|| Or, *the conscience witnessing with them.* || Or, *between themselves.*

on the phrase, "*the work of the law* written in their hearts," in verse 15. Some have regarded it as simply equivalent to "the law written in their hearts:" but it is not likely that St. Paul used the term "work" without some definite significance. Our choice, then, lies between the two meanings, "that which the law *enjoins*," and "that which the law *effects* or *produces*," viz., the distinct conviction of certain things as right and good, and of others as wrong and base. High authorities might be cited in favour of each of these interpretations: but the latter, we conceive, is to be preferred. The clauses which follow will then come in to explain and enforce the sentiment thus briefly indicated.

We may well linger on the general truth which is here affirmed by the Apostle. God has not left Himself without a witness in the human breast,—a witness to the reality of a moral administration, and the great and broad distinctions of right and wrong. A man, even without the written revelation, may, by following the voice of conscience, become, to *some* extent, "to himself the law." Every man, too, who does not, by persistence in sinful indulgences, stifle the voice of conscience, and harden his heart against reproof, will often sit in judgment on himself, his "conscience bearing witness," and his "thoughts"—the reflections or reasonings prompted by conscience—"accusing or even excusing" him. But natural conscience is *not*, of itself, a *sufficient* guide. We conceive that its actings, except as trained by revelation, are confined to the general

16. °In the day when God shall judge the secrets

o Eccles. xii. 14; Matt. xxv. 31; John xii. 48; Rom. iii. 6;
1 Cor. iv. 5; Rev. xx. 12.

outlines of duty, the great and obvious distinctions of right and wrong; and we hold, as a momentous truth, that the conscience of an individual may become perverted, and that other influences gaining upon him may silence its voice, or cause it even to lend a sanction to that which is wrong. Our Lord Himself has recognised the fearful possibility of our faculty of spiritual perception being injured by habitual resistance to the truth, so as even to mislead us to our eternal ruin. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. *If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*" (Matt. vi. 22, 23.)

Verse 16. *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel.* This verse may be connected with verse 10, or with verse 12 as in our version, the intervening verses being parenthetical. It is at the last day, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in majesty, and shall sit enthroned as the Arbiter of the eternal destinies of men, that the principles which the Apostle had affirmed in verses 6—10 will be applied, with unerring accuracy, to the character of individuals, however different the circumstances under which their moral probation was passed. The expression, "the secret things of men," is very significant and comprehensive. It suggests not only the *hidden deeds of men*,—those which they were anxious to shroud in obscurity, and of which, while they were upon earth, few if any were cognisant; but the *prin-*

of men ^pby Jesus Christ ^qaccording to my Gospel.

17. Behold, ^rthou art called a Jew, and ^sretest in

p John v. 22 ; Acts x. 42 ; xvii. 31 ; 2 Tim. iv. 1—8 ; 1 Peter iv. 5.

q Rom. xvi. 25 ; 1 Tim. i. 11 ; 2 Tim. ii. 8.

r Matt. iii. 9 ; John viii. 33 ; Rom. ix. 6, 7. *s* Micah iii. 11 ;

Rom. ix. 4.

ciples of their inner life, of which their outward actions were the development. The thought is thus expounded by St. Paul himself, in a passage of his First Epistle to the Corinthians :—"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." (iv. 5.) In this verse, also, the Apostle refers to the appointment of *the Lord Jesus* to be the Judge of men, and speaks of it as a great and prominent truth of that "gospel" with which he had been entrusted, and which it was his joy to diffuse among the nations. For the judicial character with which our Lord is invested by the ordination of the Eternal Father is intimately connected with the whole mediatorial scheme which the gospel reveals. It is as the God-Man, and the Mediatorial Sovereign, that the Son will exercise at last the judicial function; and amidst the proceedings of the last day, the principles of the economy of grace will be brought out in their amplest development, and in their application to the varying circumstances of every individual of our race.

Verse 17. *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, &c.* Here the Apostle enters upon his *direct* remonstrance with the members of the race of Israel, and points out the fallacy of the hopes which they cherished, and the certainty that judgment would descend upon them

the law, 'and makest thy boast of God,

† Isa. xlv. 25 ; xlviii. 2 ; John viii. 41.

if they were living in the violation of the Divine precepts. His appeal is remarkably *vivid* and *powerful*. He singles out, as it were, an individual Jew, and addresses him personally, disclosing his cherished sentiments, and then expostulating with him as to the insufficiency of all his knowledge and all his privileges, if he was practising iniquity. The several particulars enumerated in this and the following verses are well deserving of attention. Each clause has its own special import; and the whole statement derives additional interest from the intimate acquaintance with the workings of the Jewish mind which St. Paul's former experience and associations involved.

Thou art called a Jew. The thought is here suggested, that the person addressed *gloried in the very name of Jew*, since it marked his relation to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and his interest in the privileges secured to them and their descendants. There were many, in the Apostle's day, who considered the name of Jew a far nobler designation than the proud name of Roman. Depressed as their nation was, as to outward circumstances, it stood first in religious privileges. God Himself had separated the Jewish race from all other people, and had constituted them, for many ages, His visible Church.

And retest in the law. Amidst the ever-shifting speculations of the heathen, and the various systems of idolatry, distracting the mind, as well as polluting the heart, the Jew turned to "the law"—the explicit Revelation which he and his fathers held—with *certainty* and *confidence*. Here his soul found a degree of *rest*, assured that in the law he was possessed of *truth*, the very truth of God.

18. And *knowest *His* will, and ||*approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law ;

u Dent. iv. 8 ; Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20. || Or, *triest the things that differ.*
x Phil. i. 10.

Some, indeed, so "rested in the law," as to attach an undue importance to its ceremonies, and to value themselves on their strict observance. But although the expression used by St. Paul is applicable to this *false trust*, and, it may be, specially alludes to it, yet it is so comprehensive as to include that feeling of rest—the *repose of assured conviction*—with which the thoughtful and devout Jew might properly regard the revelation with which he had been favoured.

And makest thy boast of God. Here another element of Jewish feeling is brought out. The people of Israel exulted in the assurance, that JEHOVAH ELOHIM, the true and living God, was *their covenant-God*. They recalled, with holy triumph, His past interpositions on their behalf, and the proofs which He had given that He, and He only, is the Lord of heaven and earth. Even when surrounded with the pomp and splendour of heathen worship, the Jew turned away to that Unseen and Eternal Being who had condescended to reveal Himself to the fathers, and to bring the race of Israel into a special relation to Himself.

Verse 18. *And knowest His will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law.* In this verse the Apostle adverts to the *clear and exact knowledge of duty* which the Jew considered himself to possess, and the consciousness of which called forth in his mind a feeling of superiority to those around him. He knew the "will" of God. To him it was revealed in the law with certainty and precision ; so that he could discriminate

19. And *art* confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

20. An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes,

y Matt. xv. 14; xxiii. 16, 17, 19, 24; John ix. 34, 40, 41.

between different principles and actions with accuracy and confidence. There is every reason to prefer the marginal rendering of the second clause, "triest the things that differ," as expressing more correctly the import of the original. The Jew claimed *spiritual discernment*, as the result of his being trained to study and understand those Sacred Records which unfolded the Divine character and government, and prescribed the rule of duty. He was "instructed out of the law." Instead of being left to the general intimations of right which conscience affords, he was accustomed to listen, Sabbath after Sabbath, to "the law and the prophets," read and expounded in the synagogue; and thus he could "prove" his own feelings and actions, and test the principles which sought for the mastery in his breast. This discrimination was really possessed, to a greater or less extent, by the devout and spiritual among God's ancient people; but every Jew *thought himself to have it*, as he looked upon his position in contrast with that of the heathen around him.

Verses 19, 20. *And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light &c.* The statement of the Apostle proceeds with a beautiful regularity and order. He passes from the personal knowledge of the will of God, and the assured possession of spiritual discernment, to the *confidence* which the Jew cherished that he was able to *impart light to others*. To those who were altogether in the darkness of heathenism, he could present the great truths of the

*which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law.

21. "Thou therefore which teachest another, teach-

s Rom. vi. 17; 2 Tim. i. 13; iii. 5.

a Ps. l. 16, &c.; Matt. xxiii. 3, &c.

spirituality of the Divine nature, and the universal government of the one living and true God; and, if they listened with childlike docility to these truths, he could lead them onward, as "*babes*" in Divine knowledge, to clearer and ampler views of the Divine administration, and of the duties and hopes of man. For he had "*the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.*" The Scriptures in which he was instructed, and from which he could teach others, presented a beautiful *scheme* of truth,—though that scheme could not be complete until He to whom their types and predictions pointed had actually appeared, and the redemption which they shadowed forth had been actually wrought out.—Such a position as is here indicated the people of Israel was really designed by God to occupy in relation to the world around. For many ages the Jewish Church stood as a centre of light in the midst of surrounding darkness; and to its sacred services, and its clear and distinct announcements of truth, many of the heathen who were dissatisfied with their own systems turned for light, and comfort, and peace. But the language of the Apostle, addressed to the Jew with whom he expostulates, seems rather to point to a *boastful assertion* of this exalted position, than to an *humble recognition* of it with its solemn responsibilities.

Verses 21, 22. *Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preacheest &c.* This remonstrance comes home at once to the judgment and the

est thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

22. Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

b Mal. iii. 8.

conscience. It was a strange infatuation which could lead any Jew to suppose, that the knowledge of the truth, and the inculcation of it upon others, could be a substitute for personal obedience to it. So far from religious advantages palliating iniquity, and forming a ground of approval before God, they add to the enormity and baseness of a course of sin. The people of Israel, who broke through moral restraint, were chargeable, above all others, with "hindering the truth by unrighteousness;" and stood, therefore, exposed to the righteous displeasure of God.—The particular evils here specified do not require, with the exception of the last, lengthened consideration. With regard to this, surprise has been felt that the Apostle should charge the Jews with "sacrilege," in the sense of plundering that temple which they loved. To avoid this difficulty, some have referred the expression to *heathen temples*, and have translated the clause, "Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou rob their temples?" But there is no evidence that this was an evil prevalent among the Jews, and one which would, therefore, suggest itself as a ground of special expostulation. The ordinary application of the word seems preferable; and in using it the Apostle probably adverted, as Mr. Watson and others contend, to the withholding, through covetousness, of the offerings and dues which properly belonged to the temple of God. This the prophet Malachi had reproved as "robbing God." It

23. Thou that 'makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

24. For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is 'written.

c Ver. 17. d 2 Sam. xii. 14; Isa. lii. 5; Ezek. xxxvi. 20, 23.

may be, also, that there was present to the mind of St. Paul a flagrant case of robbery of sacred things which had recently transpired. Josephus records that four Jews, resident at Rome, one of whom was prominent as a teacher of the law of Moses, "persuaded Fulvia, a woman of great dignity, and one that had embraced the Jewish religion, to send purple and gold to the temple at Jerusalem, and, when they had gotten them, they employed them for their own uses." (Antiq., xviii. 3, 5.)

Verse 23. *Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?* The contrast here presented, like that found in the preceding verses, is very striking. The Jews, in general, "made their boast of the law," exulting in the possession of it as raising them far above the heathen: but by the habitual violation of its moral precepts they "dishonoured" Him who had so greatly distinguished them, and brought His revelation and His worship into disgrace. The heathen around them would identify their conduct with the religion which they professed, and would form unworthy notions of Him whose people they claimed to be. We honour God by a life of consistent piety and goodness: we "dishonour" Him by injustice, impurity, or unkindness.

Verse 24. *For the Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.* To enforce the sentiment which he had just advanced, and to shut out all reply on the part of those with whom he was expostulating,

25. 'For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep

c Gal. v. 3.

St. Paul appeals to the ancient Scriptures, as endorsing that sentiment, and affirming it, indeed, with peculiar force and solemnity. Three passages were probably in his mind. After the grievous fall of David, in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah, Nathan declared to him, among other intimations of the Divine displeasure, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." (2 Sam. xii. 14.) The prophet Isaiah, when reproving, in the name of Jehovah, acts of injustice and oppression on the part of some who occupied positions of influence among His people, says; "Now therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that My people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the Lord; and My Name continually every day is blasphemed." (Isaiah lii. 5.) In the prophecies of Ezekiel, too, the same sentiment is vividly brought out. The Most High says by him, in reference to the house of Israel, "And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned My holy Name, when they said to them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of His land. But I had pity for Mine holy Name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went." (Ezek. xxxvi. 20, 21.)

Verse 25. *For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, &c.* Here the Apostle continues his appeal to his brethren according to the flesh, admitting fully the advantages which they possessed, as the covenant-people of God, under the ancient economy, but affirming that their *individual* position

the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

26. Therefore *if* the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

f Acts x. 34, 35.

towards the Divine government must be determined by their *personal character*. With beautiful propriety he fixes on *circumcision* as the distinguishing mark of God's ancient people, and the seal of that covenant into which He had entered with them. No one term could express more fitly the position of a Jew as belonging to the outward Church. But circumcision, and the church-relation to which it introduced an individual, were not, of themselves, availing. Whether they were of ultimate and permanent benefit to a man, depended altogether on his character and conduct. In the case of the devout and obedient, "circumcision profited:" but if a man lived in open and wilful sin, "his circumcision was made uncircumcision," he forfeited his claim to be one of God's covenant-people, and the outward seal of that covenant became to him of none effect.

Verses 26, 27. *Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, &c.* Pursuing the course of thought upon which he had entered in the last verse, St. Paul now contrasts the position and state of a Jew who, notwithstanding all his church-privileges, openly transgressed the Divine law, with that of a devout Gentile, who, without being admitted to the ancient Church, should keep the law. The latter case, we conceive, is only put *hypothetically*, in order to illustrate the great principle which the Apostle

27. And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, 'judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law ?

g Matt. xii. 41, 42.

was anxious to impress on his brethren of the race of Israel. Indeed, as Dean Alford properly observes, the original words, combined with that precision and accuracy of which the Greek language admits, clearly show that the case is an hypothetical one. It is evident from the third chapter of this Epistle, that St. Paul never contemplated the possibility of a Gentile, not yet led to the Lord Jesus for justification and spiritual life, fulfilling *all* the moral precepts of the law. But to show that an outward relation to the Church of God is as nothing in comparison of obedience to the Divine will, he contrasts the two cases supposed,—that of a Jew who, while glorying in the law, wilfully transgressed it, and that of a Gentile who, being without the pale of the visible Church, obeyed it. It is a pleasing thought, that there were many devout Gentiles, who had renounced idolatry with its pollutions and follies, and who strove to do the will of God, as far as it was made known to them. Cornelius may be taken as a type of this class. Such Gentiles were naturally attracted to the worship of the synagogue; and many of them were among the earliest and best members of the Christian Churches established in the cities of the Roman Empire. But the case which the Apostle puts before us implies *more* than these Gentiles had attained; even an observance of all “the righteous precepts of the law;” and the whole structure of his language shows that he only supposes such a case for the sake of argument. Even such a devout Gentile as Cornelius might well “judge” many a proud

28. For ^hhe is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is *that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh :

^h Matt. iii. 9; John viii. 39; Rom. ix. 6, 7; Gal. vi. 15; Rev. ii. 9.

Pharisee who, while boasting of circumcision and the ritual law, lived in adultery and practised oppression; but much more in the case supposed might a Gentile claim superiority to one of the race of Israel whose conduct was so unworthy of his profession and hopes.

Verses 28, 29. *For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, &c.*—This is the impressive *conclusion* of this branch of the Apostle's reasoning. In opposition to the delusive views which he had been combating, and the lofty arrogance with which the fact of an outward connection with God's ancient people was sometimes paraded, St. Paul affirms that he only was a Jew, in the highest and best sense, whose heart was right with God, and who resisted and strove against inward corruption. Thus he sheds a clear and steady light on some of the past dispensations of God towards mankind. The selection of the descendants of Abraham, in the line of Isaac and Jacob, to be His peculiar people, did not imply that they were *all* accepted of Him; nor did it involve the exclusion of all others from His favour. That selection was influenced by important purposes connected with the preparation of the world for the coming of the Messiah; and it still left the position and destiny of *individuals* to be determined by their *personal character*. But the principle which the Apostle lays down has a very wide application, and may well awaken serious thought in the minds of all professing Christians. For it teaches us, that an outward relation to the Church of God,

29. But he *is* a Jew, 'which is one inwardly; and
 *circumcision *is that* of the heart, 'in the spirit *and* not
 in the letter; "whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

† 1 Peter. iii. 4. k Phil. iii. 3; Col. ii. 11.

l Rom. vii. 6; 2 Cor. iii. 6. m 1 Cor. iv. 5; 2 Cor. x. 18;

1 Thess. ii. 4.

however legitimate the mode of our admission to it, and
 however exact our observance of its forms, is wholly in-
 sufficient to constitute us His true people. Our claim to
 that character depends on that which is *hidden*, as opposed
 to that which is *outward*,—on the principles which are
 cherished in *our inmost soul*, principles which God only can
 fully and accurately discern, so that we should all await
 His decision, and seek to be at last approved by Him.

CHAPTER III.

1. WHAT advantage then hath the Jew? or what

CHAPTER III.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

ST. PAUL had now established the principle, that every man will be ultimately dealt with by God according to his *personal character*, and that an outward church-relation to Him will not shelter any one who loves and practises sin. His way was thus open to the conclusion which he sought to reach,—that the Jews, as well as the Gentiles, were guilty before God, and exposed to His righteous displeasure. But he pauses in his general argument, to meet some *difficulties*, and answer some *objections*, which his preceding reasonings might call forth in the Jewish mind. He maintains that, notwithstanding the principle which he had affirmed, the position of the race of Israel, under the former economy, *did* involve great religious advantages; and he specifies, as pre-eminent among them, the possession of the written revelation with its promises of blessing. He contends, further, that the faithfulness of God to His engagements will be distinctly manifested, even though individuals fail of attaining the blessings held forth to them, through their own unbelief and perverseness. Then he comes to the conclusion of this section of his argument,—that, inasmuch as Jews and Gentiles are “all under sin,” justification by the deeds of the law is impossible, and nothing remains to man but to take his place as confessedly guilty before God.

profit is there of circumcision ?

And now he proceeds to unfold, in glowing and impressive language, "*the righteousness of God*,"—that righteousness which He imputes to men according to His scheme of grace in Christ Jesus. Intimations of a plan of gratuitous justification through a Mediator, and that justification to be received by faith, had, he affirms, been given in the ancient Scriptures: but, under the gospel, the Divine method of justification is fully disclosed and openly proclaimed. This righteousness, which is offered to all men, without exception, upon their believing in the Lord Jesus, rests upon the redemption which He has wrought out. His death, the Apostle teaches us, is the propitiatory offering designed in the counsels of the Eternal Father, and now set forth as the object of our trust; and through His vicarious suffering the essential righteousness of God is maintained and manifested, even while He justifies the returning sinner that believes in Jesus. The *excellence* of this method of justification is then dwelt upon. The Apostle affirms, in a tone of exulting confidence, that it strikes at the root of the pride so fondly cherished by our depraved nature,—that it is adapted to the necessities of all mankind, and evinces the regard of God to all,—and that it upholds the declarations of the ancient revelation, while it establishes the moral law, and provides for its being obeyed in spirit and in truth.

Verse 1. *What advantage then hath the Jew ? or what profit is there of circumcision ?* In these inquiries St. Paul anticipates an objection which his preceding argument might call forth in the minds of many of the Jews. He had been contending that the external rite of circumcision,

2. Much every way: chiefly, because that *unto* them were committed the oracles of God.

α Deut. iv. 7, 8; Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20; Rom. ii. 18; ix. 4.

and an outward church-relation to God, indicated by it, could not suffice to secure the Divine favour, and that if a person who gloried in these lived in the violation of the Divine precepts, "his circumcision was made uncircumcision,"—he, in effect, forfeited his position as one of God's covenant-people, and was, equally with the Gentiles who lived in sin, the object of the Divine displeasure. Now the first thought which would arise in the minds of many, on pondering these reasonings, would be, that if they were true, then there was no advantage in being numbered among the ancient people of God, and that the sacred rite which formed the sign and seal of a covenant-relation to Him was utterly valueless. This objection the Apostle puts in clear and forcible terms; and then proceeds distinctly and firmly to reply to it.

Verse 2. *Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.* Here St. Paul first affirms, that the advantages of God's ancient people were great and numerous; and then, as if intending to specify them, adds, that the *first* and *chief* of these advantages was, that they "were entrusted with the oracles of God." No language can mark more impressively than this, the value which the Apostle placed on the written revelation. It has been suggested, that the phrase, "*the oracles of God,*" occurred to him from his vivid recollection of the apology of Stephen: (Acts vii. 38 :) but whether this was the case or not, it illustrates the lofty view which he took of the inspiration and Divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures. In them *God spoke to men*; revealing His

3. For what if 'some did not believe? 'shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

b Rom. x. 16; Heb. iv. 2.

c Num. xxiii. 19; Rom. ix. 6; xi. 29; 2 Tim. ii. 13.

character, His government, and His purposes of grace. And these Divine oracles were *entrusted* to the Jewish Church. Amidst the surrounding darkness of heathenism, and the dim and fluctuating speculations of philosophy, the race of Israel possessed a distinct and certain revelation. They had the Scriptures for their own instruction, and comfort, and warning; and they held them also as a sacred *deposit*, to preserve them in unimpaired integrity and purity, to bring the truths contained in them before the heathen, as opportunity should serve, and to keep them as an evidence of the claims of the great Restorer, when He should actually appear, to make a full disclosure of the Divine plans, and Himself to accomplish the redemption of mankind. For these sacred oracles did not merely prescribe the duties of men: they shadowed forth the Divine scheme of grace, and told of the coming of the Anointed One, the Prophet, and Priest, and King, of that better economy under which the people of God should be raised to the highest spiritual privileges.

Verse 3. *For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?* These words do not constitute a new objection, as some have strangely imagined, but form rather a continuation of the Apostle's reasoning respecting the religious advantages of the Jews. His position is, that to the *believing* and *obedient* among God's ancient people His promises of grace stood firm; and that the *unfaithfulness* of others—their guilty *unbelief* and *disobedience*—could not set aside the *faithfulness* of

4 'God forbid: yea, let 'God be true, but 'every

d Job xl. 8.

e John iii. 33.

f Ps. lxii. 9; cxvi. 11.

God, or deprive His devout people of the blessings which He had assured to them. All who walked in the steps of Abraham's faith, and who sought, as he did, to do the will of God, would prove the security of the Divine engagements. These were accepted, even as Abraham was, through faith in the coming Redeemer, to whose sacrifice and priesthood, shadowed forth in the Levitical arrangements, they looked forward with greater or less distinctness, and through whom they claimed all the promises of God. The fact that some even of the chosen race treated the Divine announcements and promises with cold neglect, could not prove that no advantage attached to the position of the Jew, since it could not annul the unchanging fidelity of God, nor affect its manifestation towards those who relied on His word, and sought to obey His precepts. These last possessed the rich heritage of blessing assured to them in the written revelation, and implied in a covenant-relation to God.

Verse 4. *God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.* The exclamation with which this verse commences may be more literally rendered, "*Let it not be.*" It is repeatedly found in the writings of St. Paul, and is an expression of pious horror at a sentiment which could not but shock the sensibilities of a spiritual mind. In the present case, the devout mind of the Apostle recoiled from the thought that God's faithfulness could fail, and that some men, by their perverse unbelief, could frustrate His counsel as to His believing and obedient people. So far from admitting such a sentiment, even for a moment, he

man a liar; as it is written, 'That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged.

g Ps. li. 4.

exclaims, in effect, 'Let it not be! Let all men be accounted false, rather than that the fidelity of God should be impugned or questioned! His unfailing truth is a fundamental principle, which must be maintained, whatever becomes of the truthfulness of men.'

As it is written, That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged. It is instructive to mark how repeatedly St. Paul turns to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, either to confirm or to illustrate the sentiments which he advances. It was the fixed habit of his mind, to seek in "the oracles of God," as possessed by the Jewish Church, the great principles of the Divine government, as well as intimations of the economy of grace, and foreshadowings of the arrangements and blessings of the Gospel. The passage which he here adduces is designed to confirm the sentiment, that if any man should presumptuously call in question the procedures of God, those procedures could be triumphantly vindicated. Such a sentiment, in effect, had been expressed by David, in his penitential Psalm, composed when he was aroused to reflection, and humbled into the dust, after his sad and grievous fall. He threw himself upon the mercy of God, confessing his sin, as that which was ever before his eyes, haunting him with its awful reminiscences, poisoning all the comforts of his life, and gradually withering his strength: and he confessed that the threatened judgments of God were righteous and merited, and that he had nothing to plead why they should not descend upon him.

5. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (*I speak as a man.)

h Rom. vi. 19; Gal. iii. 15.

Should he attempt to dispute with God, the rectitude of the Divine judgments could be easily vindicated; while His faithfulness to His promises would be illustrated by His faithfulness to His threatenings, and by the penal inflictions which came down on the perverse and rebellious.

Verse 5. *But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man.)* This last clause is introduced to show that St. Paul is not here advancing a sentiment of his own, but rather giving utterance to a thought which might arise in the mind of some bold man who, instead of subjecting his understanding to the teaching and authority of God, presumed to cavil at His administrative acts. The sentiment may, perhaps, be paraphrased thus:—‘If our unrighteousness thus serves to bring out to view and to establish the righteousness of God, affording scope for the more signal manifestation of His moral perfections, should not this alter, in some way, our position, and shield us from His penal inflictions?’ The proper import of the clause which we render “who taketh vengeance” should be carefully noted. It is *not* equivalent to “who rendereth retribution,” but is, literally, “*who inflicteth wrath.*” It refers, distinctly and pointedly, to the penal visitations of the Divine displeasure upon those who coldly neglect God and transgress His precepts.

6. God forbid : for then 'how shall God judge the world ?

† Gen. xviii. 25 ; Job viii. 3 ; xxxiv. 17.

Verse 6. *God forbid : for then how shall God judge the world ?* Here, again, we have the spontaneous utterance of a pious horror, "Let it not be!" The reverent mind of the Apostle revolted from the sentiment just advanced. And the brief inquiry with which he meets it is amply sufficient to expose its fallacy. His argument, "How then shall God judge the world?" would naturally recall to every thoughtful Jew the appeal of his great ancestor, Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. xviii. 25,) and would suggest the awful presumption of any man attributing to the Eternal God the least departure from rectitude. This, however, is not, we apprehend, the precise point of the Apostle's question. It has a far more direct bearing on the general course of his reasoning. It may, perhaps, be thus paraphrased:—'On the plea now alleged, that when a man's unfaithfulness and sin give occasion to a brighter display of God's righteousness, the punishment of that man should be mitigated, or even set aside, how would it be *possible* for God to judge the world; how could rewards and punishments be dealt out to men according to their character and conduct?' The force of this reasoning must be at once apparent. It is an important fact that God overrules *all* the unrighteousness of men so as to bring out into bolder relief some of the perfections of His own character, and so as to establish and illustrate the principles of His government: but if this fact could be held to mitigate their guilt and screen them from punishment, then a judgment of the world—the

7. For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner.

8. And not *rather*, (as we be slanderously re-

rendering of righteous retribution to every man according to his works—would become impossible.

Verse 7. *For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie &c.* This is, in effect, the objection just refuted presented in a different form. St. Paul, who well knew the sophistry to which some of his brethren according to the flesh might have recourse, in order to repel the charge of sinfulness and exposure to wrath, supposes a Jew to repeat the inquiry, whether, if his falsehood and unfaithfulness served to bring out the more clearly the truth and faithfulness of God, he might not hope to escape condemnation, or at least to have that condemnation mitigated? To this question he gives an indignant reply.

Verse 8. *And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) &c.* The intense earnestness of the Apostle's reprobation of the sentiment he was refuting, appears in the very form of his reply. Without entering into a lengthened argument, he at once detects the principle involved in that sentiment, and points out the hideous consequences to which it would lead. He contends that, if the fact that sin is often subordinated by God to the brighter manifestation of His perfections, and the upholding of the principles of His government, could be admitted as a ground on which men might claim exemption from punishment, this would be, in fact, to encourage the perpetration of evil, in order that good might be brought out of it. This principle, so destructive of all morality, the malice of some persons had led them falsely and

ported, and as some affirm that we say,) ¹Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

9. What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before *proved both Jews and Gentiles, that 'they are all under sin;

* Rom. v. 20; vi. 1, 15.

* Gr. *charged*. Rom. i. 28, &c.; ii. 1, &c. 1 v. 23; Gal. iii. 22.

slanderosly to charge on the Christians, knowing that they could not more effectually blacken their character. But the Apostle does not stay formally to expose the wickedness of this principle. He simply and emphatically says of those who hold it and act upon it, "Whose damnation is just." It was, indeed, unnecessary to dwell on it at length. Every man must feel that, if it were admitted, it would lead to an obliteration, or a practical disregard, of all moral distinctions, and thus throw the universe of God into irretrievable confusion.

Verse 9. *What then? are we better than they?* No, in no wise: &c. The question with which this verse opens was suggested by the preceding refutation of the false excuses by which some of the Jews sought to extenuate their sins, and even to claim exemption from punishment. Baffled in their vain reasonings, they are represented as asking, "What then? have we any preference?" And the reply of St. Paul is simple and emphatic, "No, in no wise;" and, referring to his reasonings in the two preceding chapters, as to the actual sinfulness both of the Gentiles and the Jews, he adds, that on all alike the sentence of condemnation rests. Great as was the pre-eminence of the Jews in *religious privileges*, more especially as possessing the written revelation, they were, equally with the Gentiles, liable to the penalty denounced

10. As it is written, "There is none righteous, no, not one:

11. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

13. "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues, they have used deceit; ^othe poison of asps is under their lips:

m Ps. xiv. 1, 2, 3; liii. 1. *n* Ps. v. 9; Jer. v. 16. *o* Ps. cxl. 3.

against transgression, since they had sinned against God and been unfaithful to His covenant.

Verses 10—18. *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, &c.* Here we have a series of quotations from different portions of the ancient Scriptures, in which the sins of men are vividly depicted, and the *universality* of corruption and iniquity is affirmed. Some of the statements are taken, with a slight variation of phraseology, from the fourteenth Psalm:—"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Verses 2, 3.) The marginal references indicate the places where the other expressions are to be found; and the reader will do well carefully to consult them. The forms of sin adverted to in these passages include violations of the duties which we owe immediately to God, and of those also which we owe to our fellow-men; and thus the Apostle's remarks connect themselves with the general

14. "Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness :

15. "Their feet *are* swift to shed blood :

16. Destruction and misery *are* in their ways :

17. And the way of peace have they not known :

18. "There is no fear of God before their eyes.

19. Now we know that what things soever 'the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law : that

p Ps. x. 7.

q Prov. i. 16 ; Isa. lix. 7, 8.

r Ps. xxxvi. 1.

s John x. 34 ; xv. 25.

principle which he had laid down in i. 18. All had been guilty, he, in effect, affirms, of "ungodliness and unrighteousness," and had, though in different degrees, "resisted the truth by unrighteousness."

Verse 19. *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them &c.*—The position which the Apostle takes up in the *former* part of this verse, is designed specially to bear on the race of Israel. They, indeed, were the persons indicated as being "under" or, more literally, "*in the law*" (ἐν τῷ νόμῳ). They possessed the Holy Scriptures, and were bound by their relation to God to observe all His precepts ; so that if they were chargeable with transgression, they must stand exposed to the threatened penalty. But from this position the Apostle properly advances to a *general conclusion*. As to the sinfulness of the Gentiles there was no dispute ; and if the Jew, notwithstanding his religious advantages, must abandon every plea of self-justification, surely the Gentile also must take his place before God as unworthy and undone. Thus "*every mouth*" was to be "*stopped*," and the whole world brought to acknowledge that it lay under

'every mouth may be stopped, and *all the world may become || guilty before God.

20. Therefore *by the deeds of the law there shall

t Job v. 16; Ps. cvii. 42; Ezek. xvi. 63; Rom. i. 20; ii. 1.

u Ver. 9, 23; ch. ii. 2.

|| Or, *subject to the judgment of God.*

w Ps. cxliii. 2; Acts xiii. 39; Gal. ii. 16; iii. 11; Ephes. ii. 8, 9;

Titus iii. 5.

the sentence of condemnation before God, and exposed to the penalty of sin which He inflicts. Let us not forget that the attitude of spirit here indicated is that which prepares an individual to welcome the Divine scheme of grace, and by faith to embrace the Lord Jesus. It is only when our "mouth" is "stopped,"—when we abandon all attempts to excuse or palliate our sin, when we renounce all dependence on our outward privileges, or on the efforts which we can put forth, and when, in fact, we take our place before God as utterly guilty, undone, and helpless,—that we can rest on Him whom the Father has set forth as our Hope and Refuge, and, embracing Him, can be accounted righteous for His sake, and receive the new inward life which His Spirit breathes into the hearts of His people.

Verse 20. *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law &c.* It is not necessary, or desirable, to alter the rendering of the former clause to "by works of law;" for the Apostle, throughout this discussion, has not spoken of "law" in the abstract. It is sufficient to remember, that *the law of God* to which he here refers is not to be restricted to the written law given to the Jews, but to be extended to that law as partially made known to the Gentiles, through the intimations of right which conscience afforded, and the rays of Divine truth which came to them from primeval tradition. The

no flesh be justified in His sight: for ^yby the law is the knowledge of sin.

21. But now ^zthe righteousness of God without

^y Rom. vii. 7.

^z Acts xv. 11; Rom. i. 17; Phil. iii. 9; Heb. xi. 4, &c.

Apostle comprehends all men, whatever degree of religious light may have been vouchsafed to them, in this general declaration, in which he reiterates and confirms the conclusion to which his preceding reasonings have led. That conclusion is, that justification before God on the ground of obedience to the law is now impossible. Sinful as men are, and chargeable as every one is with some transgressions, the law, instead of disclosing the path of acceptance and life, reveals, on the contrary, our condition of guilt and ruin; and the more clearly and amply its requirements are placed before us, the more distinctly and fully does it make known our iniquity and our danger.

Verse 21. *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.* Here the Apostle enters upon a comprehensive exposition of the method of justification which God has established, and which, under the gospel, is clearly set forth. He amplifies, in this and the following verses, the sentiments which he had briefly expressed in i. 17. He had just reached the conclusion of the argument by which he had proved that all men need a method of justification distinct from that of obedience to the law; and now, with devout interest, he unfolds the *righteousness* which God imputes to every believer in Jesus, according to the constitution of grace. Different explanations have been given of the phrase, "the righteousness of God;" but the precise shade

the law is manifested, "being witnessed by the law and the prophets ;

a John v. 46 ; Acts xxvi. 22. b Rom. i. 2 ; 1 Peter i. 10.

of meaning which it is designed to present is sufficiently indicated by the connection in which it occurs. It refers, clearly, not to the attribute of righteousness as belonging to God Himself, but to righteousness considered as *imputed to man*, in opposition to a state of *condemnation* ; and it is designed to fix our attention on the truth, that this righteousness is now imputed to us *according to that scheme or constitution which God has established*, and which He recognises in the moral administration of this world. This righteousness is "*without the law* ;" it is a righteousness which becomes ours independently of the law, and notwithstanding that we have failed to obey its precepts. For it rests, as the Apostle goes on to show, upon a different ground, the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, which faith appropriates, and in which it secures a personal interest. This "righteousness of God," the Apostle affirms, "*is now manifested* : " it is brought out, under the present economy, into the clearest light, and held forth to the attainment of all, however guilty, who fly in penitence and faith to the appointed Refuge. Intimations of this scheme of grace had, indeed, been given in the former announcements of God to man, and the whole series of the Divine dispensations had, in an important sense, *borne witness* to it : but now only was it clearly unfolded and distinctly proclaimed. We have already seen how deep an interest this sentiment called forth in the mind of St. Paul. Even in the opening of this Epistle, on the very first mention of "the Gospel of God," he adds, "which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures ;" and now,

when about to explain at length "the righteousness of God," the ground on which it rests, and the blessings which it involves, he affirms that, while its *manifestation* belongs to the present economy, it had been "*witnessed by the law and the prophets.*" A full development of this thought would exceed the limits of a note: but we may properly advert to a few of the intimations of the Divine scheme of grace which are found in the ancient Scriptures. The rite of *sacrifice*, introduced immediately after the fall, and afterwards more fully developed, opened to guilty man a new way of approach to God, and carried forward the thoughtful mind to a greater Sacrifice that should, in the fulness of time, be presented. The patriarch Abraham, as St. Paul argues at length in the following chapter, was accounted righteous through his faith in the covenant-engagements of God; and the declarations of God to him on which his descendants loved to dwell—the declarations which pointed out the Messiah as the Source of *blessing to mankind*—could in no way be so distinctly fulfilled as by the free offer of pardon and eternal life to men upon their believing in Him. Successive prophets gave forth announcements of rich and deep import, relative to the vicarious sufferings of the Messiah, and the justification which should result from them to all who should confide in Him. We may recall, in particular, the words of Isaiah in chap. liii. After an impressive statement of the deep anguish and ignominious death of the Substitute of men, he speaks of the glory that should follow, and says, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of Himself shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." We may refer, also, to the announcement of God by Jeremiah, xxiii. 5, 6:—"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall

22. Even the righteousness of God *which is by**c* Rom. iv. throughout.

reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Equally impressive is the message which Gabriel conveyed to the prophet Daniel:—"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." (Dan. ix. 24.) But these passages, in which righteousness is expressly mentioned as flowing to man through the suffering but exalted Saviour, are not the only ones which the Apostle had in view. There are many others in the writings of the prophets, in which the Messiah is represented as bringing glad tidings to the distressed, healing the broken in heart, breaking the fetters of the captives, and leading them forth to a state of holy liberty; and the figurative language of these passages implies, that this deliverance would be of grace, and not the result of personal merit or effort. (See, in particular, Isaiah xlii. 6, 7; lxi. 1—3.) Thus had the method of gratuitous justification been "witnessed by the law and the prophets;" and now that it is distinctly set forth, we see how beautifully the language which the Holy Spirit inspired holy men of old to use accorded with it.

Verse 22. *Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all &c.* Here the Apostle goes on to develop the theme in which he exulted,—“the righteousness of God,” as it is now fully disclosed under the gospel.

faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for 'there is no difference:

d Rom. x. 12; Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11.

And he makes prominent two considerations; first, that this righteousness becomes ours *through faith in Jesus Christ*, and secondly, that it is imputed to *all*, Jews and Gentiles, *without distinction*, who thus believe. It is important to observe the distinct and forcible manner in which the Apostle represents the Lord Jesus Christ as *the Object* of saving faith, and to note, also, that the whole tenor of his remarks (not to refer to statements found in other passages of Scripture) implies, that this faith is not a cold intellectual assent to the claims of the Lord Jesus, or to the doctrine of His atonement, but a *reliance* upon Him as our only Hope and Refuge,—such a reliance as only a man whose “mouth is stopped,” and who acknowledges his position to be one of utter sinfulness and guilt before God, can put forth.—With regard to the expressions, “*unto all* and *upon all* them that believe,” it is right to mention, that the latter, “and upon all,” is wanting in several of the earliest and best MSS. If it is retained, the combination of the two phrases should perhaps be explained thus, that the former, “unto all,” is used with a reference to the word “is manifested,” while the latter more forcibly expresses the actual imputation of this righteousness to individual men. But both are to be connected with the words that follow, “them that believe.” The truth which St. Paul here affirms is, that *all men*, without any distinction of Jew and Gentile, may be accounted righteous on the simple condition of self-renouncing trust in the appointed Saviour.

23. For 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ;

24. Being justified freely / by His grace 'through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus :

e Rom. iii. 9 ; xi. 32. *f* Rom. iv. 16 ; Ephes. ii. 8 ; Titus iii. 5, 7.
g Matt. xx. 28 ; Ephes i. 7 ; Col. i. 14 ; 1 Tim. ii. 6 ; Heb. ix. 12 ;
 1 Peter i. 18, 19.

Verse 23. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* This declaration is called forth by the remark which immediately precedes it. The Apostle had stated that "there is no difference" between the Jew and the Gentile, between any one man and another, in the method of justification ; and one reason of this is, that all are involved in a common ruin, that all, before they come to Christ, lie under one sentence of condemnation. Some expositors, among whom may be mentioned Dean Alford and Dr. Tholuck, regard the expression, "the glory of God," as equivalent to "the praise which comes from God." But this is, to say the least, an unusual application of the words ; and we conceive that the Apostle designs rather to affirm the solemn truth, that all men have fallen short of the great object for which human nature was originally formed, even to reflect the moral excellencies of God, and to glorify Him by a life of devotion and obedience.

Verse 24. *Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* In this and the following verses, St. Paul still further unfolds the evangelical method of justification. He had already called attention to the fact, that its one *condition* is a self-renouncing trust in the Lord Jesus, and that it is vouchsafed to *all*, without distinction, who thus believe ; and now he adverts to other important considerations. He lingers on the perfectly

25. Whom God hath ||set forth [†]*to be* a propitiation through faith [‡]*in His blood*, to declare His

|| Or, *fore-ordained*. ^h Lev. xvi. 15; 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10. [‡] Col. i. 20.

gratuitous character of this justification, and on the fact that it forms a development of the *free and undeserved love of God*; and then he states the *ground* on which it rests,—even the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, through which the principles of the Divine government are maintained unimpaired, and its great ends are secured, while the returning sinner who trusts in that alone is received to favour. The justification of sinful men is “through the redemption that is *in Christ Jesus*.” He has *ransomed* us by the substitution of His own life; and has thus provided for our deliverance from guilt, and our rescue from a state of misery and peril. Perhaps, too, there is a deep significance in the statement, that this redemption is “*in Christ Jesus*.” We have but to come to HIM, THE REDEEMER, in the appropriation of His sacrifice, and this redemption is ours. United to Him, we share in the benefits which flow from His mediatorial interposition; we are delivered from a state of condemnation and thralldom, and introduced to one of peace, and liberty, and heavenly hope.

Verse 25. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.* Here the great truth of THE ATONEMENT is clearly and prominently brought forward. The word which we translate “propitiation” should rather have been rendered “*propitiatory offering*,” an import which it often sustains, and which is clearly the most suitable to the context. The death of Jesus is thus placed before us as that which causes the judicial displeasure of God to pass away from those who penitently trust in

righteousness ^kfor the ||remission of 'sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

^k Acts xiii. 38, 39; 1 Tim. i. 15. || Or, *passing over*.

^l Acts xvii. 30; Heb. ix. 15.

it. The very term selected by the Apostle doubtless suggests this view. We must not, indeed, imagine that there is any implacability in God; nor must we overlook the consideration, so often made prominent in the New Testament, and recognised in this very passage, that the scheme of redemption originated in the love of the Triune Deity to man, and especially reveals the Father's benignity and grace. But, on the other hand, we must ever remember the solemn truth which the Apostle had affirmed in i. 18, that there is *wrath* in the Divine mind against sin, and against those who practise it in known and wilful resistance to the truth which they possess; not, indeed, the turbulent passion of anger, such as often inflames the human breast; not a feeling which partakes in the slightest degree of malignity; but the deep, calm, intense displeasure of a perfectly holy Nature against that which is morally base and vile. But this displeasure, and all its judicial manifestations, cease towards every man who penitently relies on the Redeemer's sacrifice. Christ becomes "our peace;" and the soul, released from its burden of guilt, can rejoice in the Father's smile. It is important to observe, also, the profound import of the Apostle's statement, "Whom *God hath set forth* as a propitiatory offering." The marginal translation is "fore-ordained;" and, probably, this idea is to be combined with that conveyed in the common rendering, in order to bring out the full meaning of the term. The great truth intended is, that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is that

which the Father *has appointed*,—that which was *designed beforehand* in His counsel, and which He has now *set forth* as the one, the all-sufficient, the unfailing Refuge of man. How great is the encouragement which this last consideration affords to the contrite sinner! As he lifts his eyes to Calvary, he beholds the great Sin-offering to which the Father Himself points him, as that through which he may be received to favour. He has the express warrant of a Divine appointment, a Divine command, and a Divine promise, to trust in Jesus. Nor is it possible to come to Him, in penitence and self-renunciation, and be rejected. The counsel of God—His scheme and promise of grace—stands firm to every believer.—Again the Apostle recognises the importance of this *faith*, as the condition of personal justification, while he defines, yet more clearly and distinctly, its *object*. It is “faith in the blood of Jesus,”—a reliance on His death, considered as a propitiatory sacrifice, such a reliance on it as implies the renunciation of every other hope.

To declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God. In this clause, and in the verse which follows, St. Paul traces the *relation* of the sacrifice of Christ to the *Divine government*. His statement is remarkably full and comprehensive. He affirms, first of all, that that sacrifice has been appointed for “a *manifestation*,” or showing forth, “of the *righteousness of God*,” even while mercy is extended to the sinful. There can be little question, that the phrase “His righteousness” is here to be understood, as in verse 5, of the *essential rectitude* of the Divine character, that rectitude which distinguishes all the acts of Jehovah’s government, however mysterious some of them may be to our feeble and limited apprehension. The manifestation of this righteousness afforded by the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus has two

26. To declare, *I say*, at this time His righteousness ; that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

important bearings. It casts light upon the past ; and it shows that the present economy of grace, which offers justification as a free gift, on the simple ground of faith in Jesus, harmonises with the essential principles of the Divine administration. It is to the former of these bearings that the present clause refers. The term *πάρεσις*, which occurs only in this passage, may be more accurately rendered "passing over," as in the margin, than "remission ;" and the sentiment of the Apostle is, that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus stands as the manifestation of the righteousness of God, and of His firm adherence to the principles of His government, even when, through so many ages, He had, in His great forbearance, passed over, so as not immediately to punish, the sins of men, but had issued to them invitations to repentance, and had held out to them the hope of forgiveness. (ii. 4.)

Verse 26. *To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* The words, "at this time," clearly point to the *Christian economy*, when the counsel of God is fully unfolded, and the method of gratuitous justification through faith in the Lord Jesus is pressed upon mankind. The sacrifice of Calvary forms, the Apostle affirms, a sufficient declaration, or showing forth, of the judicial righteousness of God, even when He *justifies* the man who believes in Jesus. For as we gaze upon that sacrifice, we perceive that it maintains all the principles of the Divine government in full and efficient operation. No license is given to offence ; no suspicion is called forth that, after all, God will

27. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

28. Therefore we conclude *that a man is justified

m Rom. ii. 17, 23; iv. 2; 1 Cor. i. 29, 31; Ephes. ii. 9.

n Acts xiii. 38, 39; Rom. iii. 20, 21, 22; viii. 3; Gal. ii. 16.

make terms with sin, and not visit it with the threatened penalty. The justification of sinful man rests on the substitution of One in whose mysterious Person the Divine and human natures met; and who, constituted by the Father the Head and Representative of our race, when He had established a perfect human righteousness, took the place of the guilty, and died for us a penal death. Here was a declaration, in the face of the Universe, of the hatred with which God regards sin; here was an assertion, the most affecting and overwhelming, of the great principle, that sin must be visited with suffering. And when a man "believes in Jesus," or, more literally, "is of the faith of Jesus,"—when, confessing his guilt, and turning away from every sin, he reposes all his trust for acceptance on Christ alone,—he is brought, according to the Divine scheme of grace, into such a *relation* to Christ, that the saving benefits of His death accrue to him, and the Eternal Father, while maintaining His rectoral justice, can account him righteous through Him who bore in his stead the penalty of sin.

Verses 27, 28. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? &c.*—St. Paul had now fully unfolded the method of justification which God has established, and had set forth the atoning death of the Lord Jesus as that on which it rests,—that which brings it into harmony with the great principles of the Divine administration. And now

by faith without the deeds of the law.

he enters upon a brief series of *appeals*, designed to exhibit its excellence and its adaptation to universal man. A similar series of appeals, marked by the same exulting confidence and holy triumph, is found at the close of his statement of the privileges and hopes of believers in ch. viii. In the first place, he dwells on the consideration, that the scheme of justification by grace through faith shuts out *all boasting* from man. Not only is the vaunting of the Jew in his religious privileges excluded, but every man, in order to be justified, must take his place before God as utterly undone, as one who can only be accounted righteous through the appointed Mediator. Thus a blow is struck at the root of our depravity. Naturally man glories in himself. He is guilty, in too many instances, of self-idolatry. A secret pride vitiates many of his fairest actions, so that, even while men may applaud him, he stands before God as sinful and corrupt. Now the method of justification through a simple trust in the righteousness and sacrifice of Another, tends to subdue this pride, and even to banish it from the heart. Had "righteousness" been held forth to us as that to which we ourselves might have contributed, compensating in part for our past violations of law, we should have had some ground of boasting in ourselves: but the method of justification through *faith alone*—through "*faith without the deeds of the law*"—recognises that justification as perfectly gratuitous, and thus silences the last whisper of self-applause. There is an intimate connection between the two verses which we are now considering. In the latter, several valuable MSS. have the word "for" instead of "therefore;" and this is probably the correct reading. If it is adopted, the

29. *Is He* the God of the Jews only? *is He* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

30. Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the

o Rom. x. 12, 13; Gal. iii. 8, 20, 28.

import of the verse will be, "For we hold it as a settled conclusion, that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law." The stress of the Apostle's remark is on the last consideration, that in the Divine scheme of justification "the works of the law" have no place; and thus all boasting on the part of man is for ever excluded.

Verses 29, 30. *Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, &c.* Here a second general consideration is brought forward. The method of justification by grace through faith is one adapted to all mankind, one, too, which shows that God not only reigns over, but cares for, the whole human family. It is a provision which meets the state of guilt, destitution, and helplessness, in which all men are involved, and which offers to all, without distinction, on the same simple condition, the inestimable blessing of righteousness before God. Thus it shows how the tender mercy of our God has come forth to banish the gloom of our world, and to recover us from our alienation. No stress, as it has been properly remarked, is to be laid on the difference of the prepositions in the two clauses, "who shall justify the circumcision *by* faith (*ἐκ πίστεως*), and the uncircumcision *through* faith (*διὰ τῆς πίστεως*)". The modification of the expression, doubtless, *slightly* varies the aspect under which the relation of faith to justification is presented: but no important point is involved in this. The former phrase seems to refer to faith as a state of mind which must *immediately* precede justification; while the latter represents it as *the instrument through which* we are

circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.

31. Do we then make void the law through faith ?

brought into a saving relation to Christ, and are thus accounted righteous. But the same method of justification is expressed in each phrase. It is through faith that we are justified ; and that, not because this principle is in itself right and good, nor because it tends to produce good works, but simply because it appropriates the sacrifice of Jesus, repudiating every other ground of hope, and humbly acknowledging the free and undeserved character of the benefits that accrue to us from it.

Verse 31. *Do we then make void the law through faith ? God forbid : yea, we establish the law.* This is the crowning appeal of the Apostle, as to the excellence of the method of justification through faith in the Lord Jesus. In opposition to the idea, that by such a scheme the law is set aside and annulled, the Apostle contends that this very plan "establishes the law." This sentiment must be taken, we conceive, in its most comprehensive form. One thought suggested is, that the whole system of the law and the prophets, which had borne witness to this method of justification, and had given the promise of it, (i. 2, iii. 21,) is confirmed and borne out by it, now that it is distinctly unfolded, and proclaimed, by Divine appointment, to the whole family of man. This view is beautifully illustrated in the argument of the following chapter. But the Apostle's language implies another truth,—that by the plan of gratuitous justification through faith in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, the law itself is upheld and vindicated as "holy, and just, and good," and the great purposes for which it has been given are promoted and secured. For while, under

God forbid : yea, we establish the law.

this scheme, the observance of the law ceases to be the ground of acceptance, the sacredness and perfect rectitude of all the moral precepts of God are maintained, and provision is made for their being obeyed under the impulses of a new inward life. The contrite spirit, released from the sentence of condemnation, and invested with all the privileges of righteousness, surrenders itself unreservedly to the service of Him whose abounding grace has rescued and saved it.

CHAPTER IV.

1. WHAT shall we say then that "Abraham our

a Isa. li. 2; Matt. iii. 9; John viii. 33, 39; 2 Cor. xi. 22.

CHAPTER IV.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

IN stating the method of justification which God has established,—that we are to be accounted righteous through faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus,—St. Paul had adverted to the consideration, that the law and the prophets bore witness to it, though its full and clear development belongs to the present economy. In confirmation of this view, he now proceeds to show, that not only had the plan of gratuitous justification through faith been recognised in the ancient Scriptures, but that it had been signally exemplified in the case of the great ancestor of the Jewish people, Abraham, and that it lay at the basis of those special arrangements into which God entered with him.

The general course of thought pursued in this chapter appears to be the following. In the first place, St. Paul lays down the principle, that if Abraham had been justified by his own works, he would have had cause of glorying in himself; but he adds, that an explicit statement of the Old Testament Scriptures shuts out such a supposition, and shows that his justification was *gratuitous*, and received on his part *through faith*. The gratuitous character of justification, he goes on to show, was clearly recognised by David, in a remarkable passage in which he speaks of himself with the non-imputation of sin. Finally, he concludes, that Paul lays stress on the fact

father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found ?

justified, he was *still uncircumcised*; and he argues that when, some years afterwards, the rite of circumcision was instituted, as the sign of the covenant into which God entered with him and his descendants, that rite, so far from being the means of his justification, recognised him as already justified through his faith in the Divine promise, and his acceptance of the Divine counsel. Hence it follows, that Abraham stands as the father of all believing Gentiles, as well as of those of his descendants who walked in the steps of his faith.—In the third place, St. Paul, still fixing his attention on that memorable period in Abraham's history when circumcision was instituted,—the period which preceded by about a year the birth of Isaac,—unfolds the deep import of the Divine announcement to him, that he should be “the father of many nations,”—an announcement so important and momentous as to be marked by the change of his name from Abram to Abraham.—By an easy transition, the Apostle now turns, in the fourth place, to the *strength* of the faith of Abraham, that, even when the fulfilment of the Divine promise seemed to be impossible, according to the course of nature, he relied without wavering on the fidelity and power of God, and looked for its accomplishment.—Then, lastly, he comes to the *bearing of all this upon our case*, and affirms that justification is now to be realised through faith in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus,—that sacrifice which His resurrection from the dead shows to be accepted by the Father as the sufficient ground of justification for all who trust in Him.

Verse 1. *What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found ?* The order of

2. For if Abraham were ^bjustified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God.

^b Rom. iii. 20, 27, 28.

the words in the original requires us to connect the clause, "as pertaining to the flesh," with the verb "hath found;" and the question of St. Paul—a question designed to introduce a full discussion of the case of Abraham, as illustrative of the Divine method of justification—is, in effect, this, 'What, if justification is thus gratuitous, and may be realised by all men alike through faith in Jesus, shall we say that Abraham, our father, hath obtained, in virtue of the outward rites enjoined on him, and the outward privileges with which he was invested,—these rites and privileges separating him and his descendants from the mass of mankind, and bringing them into a special relation to God?' Such an inquiry might naturally arise in the mind of a Jew, on listening to the Apostle's exulting appeal, "Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith." (iii. 29, 30.) The inquiry suggested, too, is, in itself, of profound interest; and the views of the Divine procedures which St. Paul proceeds to unfold, are calculated to rivet the attention not only of Jewish Christians, but of all who are anxious to trace the connection and harmony of the Divine arrangements under successive dispensations of religion.

Verse 2. *For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.* This is the first position which the Apostle assumes, in discussing the case of Abraham. He contends that, if his justification had rested on any works which he himself performed, he would

3. For what saith the Scripture? 'Abraham

c Gen. xv. 6; Gal. iii.; James ii. 23.

have had cause of glorying in himself: but he adds, that this was not the case,—that Abraham could not, and did not, stand erect in the presence of God, to claim acceptance as a right, but received it as a matter of grace, through a firm reliance on the Divine testimony, and a surrender of himself to the Divine scheme of blessing. For the proof of this he refers to a remarkable passage of the ancient Scriptures.

Verse 3. *For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.* The passage here referred to occurs in the fifteenth chapter of the book of Genesis; and if we would appreciate its full significance, we must recall the circumstances supplied by that portion of the sacred history. The appearance of God to Abram which is there recorded seems to have been preceded by some special exercises of painful solicitude on the part of the patriarch. Years had now elapsed since he had obeyed the command of God, to leave his country and kindred, and become a wanderer. When that command was given, it was connected with the distinct and solemn promise of Jehovah, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. xii. 2, 3.) In the faith of this promise Abram went forth as a pilgrim; and in his various journeyings he experienced signal proofs of the Divine regard and care. But still there seemed no approach to the fulfilment of the promise. Year after year passed away; and no child was born to Abram, to give

believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

him the assurance that his seed should become numerous and mighty, and that from among them the great Restorer should arise. A temporary depression seems to have rested upon his mind, soon after his victory over Chedorlaomer and the allied chiefs; for he might well fear that he had become an object of distrust and hatred to many of the inhabitants of Canaan; and this, together with the fact that he continued childless, weighed oppressively upon his spirit. But God, who knows when His people need special succour, came to him in a vision, and said, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." The patriarch, permitted to plead with God, adverted to his disappointment that he was still childless, and seemed, indeed, to be shut up to the adoption of one of his domestic servants as his heir, that thus, in a secondary sense, he might have descendants. "And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed; and, lo, one born in my house is my heir." But the answer of Jehovah was explicit and reassuring. "And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir: but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be." Abram listened and believed; his fears were all banished; he trusted in God that He both could and would fulfil His promise; and henceforth he reposed in the assurance, that he should be the ancestor

4. Now ^dto him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

d Rom. xi. 6.

of a numerous race, from among whom there should arise that glorious Redeemer on whom his mind dwelt with devout interest. "And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." This was followed by a formal *covenant* between God and Abram *by sacrifice*; the symbol of the Divine presence passing between the parts of the divided victims.

Thus, then, according to the explicit statement of the ancient Scriptures, the *faith* of Abraham was counted, or imputed, to him "*for righteousness*,"—he was justified as one who simply rested on the Divine testimony, and surrendered himself to the Divine method of blessing. He accepted the arrangement and promise of God, and trusted himself to it; just as we now by faith accept the offered Saviour, and commit our souls, with all their eternal interests, into His hands.

Verses 4, 5. *Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, &c.* In these verses the Apostle recalls the thought which he had advanced in verse 2, and argues that, whereas a righteousness which is based on a man's own works would be claimed as *his due*, that which accrues to him through faith must be *gratuitous*, and must shut out all boasting. He dwells with interest on the contrast between these two methods of justification. The one, he contends, must exclude the other. He who seeks to be justified by faith, so far from asserting his own merit before God, takes his place before Him as "ungodly,"—as one who has treated Him with cold neglect, and violated His law,—that, as a

5. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth 'the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

c Josh. xxiv. 2.

matter of grace, his sins may be cancelled, and that he may be raised to all the privileges of righteousness.—The fifth verse places some points affecting the Scriptural doctrine of justification in a clear and striking light. It shows us, for instance, that we are not to be made holy *before* we are justified, but, on the contrary, to come with all our guilt and pollution, confessing ourselves to be ungodly and condemned, though now our hearts turn away from sin and turn to God, to be accepted *solely* through the work and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, in accordance with the Father's gracious scheme.—It refutes, also, the insidious error, that faith has been appointed to be the instrument of our justification, on account of its intrinsic rectitude and excellence, and its tendency to produce good works. Such a sentiment, it has been properly remarked, is only a refined theory of justification by works. The Scriptural view is accurately and beautifully stated by Dr. Bunting:—"When God imputes faith for righteousness, He has respect, not to the worthiness or excellency of faith, but to the worthiness and excellency of that Divine Redeemer on whom our faith terminates, and who is 'the Lord our Righteousness.'"—Another thought of deep interest is suggested by the manner in which St. Paul here describes the *faith* through which we are accounted righteous:—"To him that worketh not, but *believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness." There can be no question that the Apostle ever regarded the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the *atoning Saviour*, as the *Object* of

6. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

7. *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*

f Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

justifying faith. His own words in the preceding chapter, (verses 22, 25, 26,) not to advert to innumerable other passages, clearly show this. But he varies occasionally the mode of representing faith, in order to afford some most instructive and important views of it. In the present case, faith is placed before us as involving *an acceptance of the Father's counsel*, and a surrendering of ourselves to the way of salvation which He has appointed; such a surrender implying *the entire renunciation of personal merit*, and an acknowledgment of the *gratuitous* character of justification.

Verses 6, 7, 8. *Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, &c.* This quotation from the thirty-second Psalm is designed both to *illustrate* the perfectly *gratuitous* character of the act of justification, and to *confirm* the position, that it was recognised as sustaining this character in the ancient Scriptures. If, in the case of man, justification now implies the forgiveness of his sins, and the non-imputation to him of the transgressions with which he is justly chargeable, then it is clearly a *gratuitous* act; and the forcible expressions of the Psalmist, which attribute blessedness to that man, and, by implication, to that man only, whose transgressions are covered, come in to support the truth that no other way of justification is open to our race.—This part of the Apostle's reasoning clearly shows,

8. Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

9. *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

that forgiveness and justification must not be regarded as *distinct* acts of the Divine Mind, or as distinct blessings received by man. The several phrases, "to impute righteousness without works," "to forgive the iniquities" of a person, "to cover his sins," and "not to impute sin" to him, are all used in reference to one and the same act of God. Still, the term "justification" is one of ampler and richer import than the term "forgiveness." It contains a reference to the character of God as the righteous Administrator of law, who, even when He remits the penalty of sin to the believer in Jesus, maintains the principles of His just and holy government. Nor is this all. While it implies the reversal of the sentence of condemnation, it makes prominent the position of the forgiven sinner as one *accounted righteous*, and thus entitled, according to the gracious constitution established through the Mediator, to all the privileges and blessings of righteousness.

Verses 9, 10. *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say &c.* Here the Apostle passes to the second branch of his argument. Regarding the position as established, that the justification of Abraham was gratuitous, and was on his part received through faith, and keeping in view the sentiment of the Psalmist, that the true blessedness of man must rest upon the cancelling of his iniquities, St. Paul now dwells on the fact that, when Abraham was thus

10. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

11. And *he* received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet*

g Gen. xvii. 10.

accounted righteous, he was *still uncircumcised*. This fact had an important bearing on the question which he was discussing. A thoughtful Jew might naturally ask, 'On the plan of gratuitous justification, offered to all men alike on the simple condition of faith in Jesus, what was the benefit to Abraham and his descendants of circumcision, or what its special significance in the Divine arrangements?' To this inquiry St. Paul gives an explicit answer: but first he calls attention to the facts of the history as showing, that whatever may have been the import of circumcision, and whatever its benefit, it was not, in Abraham's case, the reason or the means of his justification. For he was accounted righteous as an uncircumcised man, several years before he and his posterity were set apart from the rest of mankind by any external rite. What was the *positive import* of circumcision in his case, and in what relation it stood to his preceding state and character, is beautifully pointed out in the following verse.

Verse 11. *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised*. It was not until fourteen years after the memorable occasion to which St. Paul had already referred,—when Abram's faith was reassured, and when, in full reliance on God's fidelity and power, he surrendered himself to His way of blessing,—that the rite of circum-

being uncircumcised : that ^hhe might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised ; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also :

^h Luke xix. 9 ; ver. 12, 16 ; Gal. iii. 7.

cision was enjoined on him, and constituted the sign of a special covenant between him and his family and the Most High. Abram had now completed his ninety-ninth year ; and the time drew near when the promise on which, for so long a period, he had reposed, was to be fulfilled. At this time, again, there was a special revelation to him of the Divine presence and glory ; and the impressive words were uttered by Jehovah, "I am the Almighty God ; walk before Me, and be thou perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly." (Gen. xvii. 1, 2.) The patriarch, humbled and filled with awe, fell on his face and listened : and Jehovah proceeded to change his name from Abram to Abraham, "the father of a great multitude," adding, "For a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." (Verses 5—7.) Then it was that the covenant-rite of circumcision was instituted ; and the explicit assurance was given to Abraham, that within a year he should have a son by Sarah, in whose line the covenant should be established. And when Abraham proceeded to intercede for Ishmael, "O that Ishmael might live before Thee !" the answer of God was, "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed ; and thou shalt call his name Isaac : and I will establish My

12. And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in

covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee : Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly ; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year." (Verses 18—21.)

Such were the memorable circumstances connected with the appointment of circumcision as the distinguishing rite of the Abrahamic covenant. These the Apostle evidently keeps in view throughout his argument. But his first position is, that the rite of circumcision, while it was the sign of a special covenant-relation to God, recognised Abraham as *already justified*. So far from being the ground, or the means, of his acceptance, it was, in his case, a " seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised ;" it was the Divine recognition of him as one who had for years firmly relied on the Divine testimony, and surrendered himself to the Divine scheme of blessing, and who, through this faith, was accounted righteous.

Verses 11, 12. . . . *That he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised ; that righteousness might be imputed to them also : and the father of circumcision &c.* It is obvious that the phraseology of St. Paul is here moulded by the Divine promise given to Abraham, in connection with the institution of circumcision, and ever kept before his mind by the change of his name from Abram to Abraham,—“A father of many nations have I made thee.” This solemn declaration, uttered

the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being *yet* uncircumcised.

13. For the promise, that he should be 'the heir of the world, *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed,

i Gen. xvii. 4, &c. ; Gal. iii. 29.

under circumstances so peculiar, assigned to Abraham a position of lofty eminence in the Church of God. It recognised him as, in one sense, the *father* of *all* who, in successive ages, should be truly the people of Jehovah. To him, as the pattern of a simple, unwavering trust in God, combined with a grateful acceptance of the Divine scheme of grace, all the pious were to look up ; his spirit they were to imbibe ; and in his footsteps they were to walk. In him, too, were they to be blessed ; for now the Divine counsel was beginning to unfold itself, and in the line of Isaac, so soon to be born to Abraham, He should at length arise through whom spiritual blessings would flow to all the nations of the earth. Looking at all the circumstances of the case, the Apostle justly argues, that the *spiritual fatherhood* of Abraham has two branches : he is the head, the father, of all *believing Gentiles*, since he, even as they, in a state of uncircumcision, was accounted righteous through faith ; and he is the father, too, of *believing Jews*, and, in the highest sense, of *such only*, since they, while they are linked to him by the tie of natural descent, and assimilated to him by the external rite of circumcision, have likewise that *spiritual affinity* which results from the principle of faith, embracing the offered Saviour, and looking, amidst every discouragement, for the fulfilment of the promises of God in Him.

Verse 13. *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, &c.* No promise couched in these precise terms

through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

is recorded in the book of Genesis; but the Apostle expresses a sentiment conveyed by two of the Divine declarations to Abraham, when placed in combination,—“A father of many nations have I made thee,” and “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” These emphatic words, viewed in their deep spiritual import, contained the assurance that, in an important sense, Abraham, as the father of all the faithful, and the ancestor of the promised Messiah, should ultimately attain to *lordship over the whole earth*. What his seed—taking that expression in its widest extent of meaning—should possess, he might be viewed as possessing. Now from him ONE was to arise,—his “Seed” emphatically and pre-eminently,—who should confer blessing on all nations, and should sway over the whole world a sceptre of righteousness and grace. In every age, also, Abraham was to have a seed of spiritual men, who should in some degree share his privileges; and, at length, his spiritual seed shall cover the earth, moulding the institutions of society, and rejoicing in the benefits which, as the recipients of their Lord’s abounding grace, they are enabled to diffuse. But this promise, the Apostle affirms, was not given to Abraham in virtue of his observance of the law, but in virtue of his being accounted righteous through faith. This was the ground on which so distinguished a position in the Divine economy was assigned to him; and all the blessings which he enjoyed through the Messiah, to whose coming he looked forward with holy interest, and into the great events of whose mediatorial undertaking he reverently inquired, were associated with his faith. Even so, the Apostle further

14. For *if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:*

k Gal. iii. 18.

intimates, as his spiritual seed arise in successive ages, to share in that "blessing" which was promised through the world's Deliverer, *their* privileges rest upon the same ground,—even the faith which embraces the Divine counsel, and reposes on the Divine fidelity and love.

Verse 14. *For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, &c.* Here the Apostle, continuing his argument, points out the consequences which would result from a contrary position to that which he had just maintained. Had the Divine arrangement secured the blessing referred to only to those who were "of the law,"—to the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, bound by the distinguishing rite of the ancient covenant, and, in process of time, brought under the obligation of the whole Mosaic law,—*faith* would have been set aside from its high position, and "rendered void" as the instrument of receiving spiritual good. Nor is this all. If the promise of blessing—of the special and abundant blessing assured to Abraham and his spiritual seed—had been dependent on the perfect observance of the law, that blessing could never have been realised. The "promise" would then have been "done away." In its very nature, as the expression of the graciousness of God to those who were stained with sin, it belonged to an economy of mercy; and to make its fulfilment depend on the observance of the law, would have been virtually to annul it.

Verse 15. *Because the law worketh wrath.* This is the reason alleged in support of the last assertion of the

15. Because 'the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, *there is* no transgression.

‡ Rom. iii. 20; v. 13, 20; vii. 8, 10, 11; 1 Cor. xv. 56; 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9; Gal. iii. 10, 19; 1 John iii. 4.

Apostle, that to make the accomplishment of the promise depend on perfect obedience to the law, would have been altogether to set it aside. In the case of man, weak and sinful as he now is, the law can only bring about subjection to condemnation. There is a peculiar propriety in the expression, "*worketh wrath.*" It casts no reflection on the law considered in itself: but it intimates that its *effect*, in *our* case, is to make us liable to the judicial displeasure of God; and that the more clearly duty is revealed, the more decided is our criminality and danger. To man, considered as fallen and corrupt, something beyond law—a scheme and promise of grace—is requisite, to give him any hope of the Divine favour.

For where no law is, there is no transgression. This consideration is brought forward to illustrate and confirm the sentiment just advanced. The entire absence of law, the Apostle argues, would involve the absence of actual transgression; while on the other hand, the existence and clear declaration of law gives occasion to sin, reveals transgression in its extent and deformity, and exposes man to its penalty. But St. Paul puts this case *hypothetically*, for the sake of his general argument. He does not affirm that there *are* those who are under no law at all,—for he had already recognised the Gentiles as possessing intimations of right suggested by conscience, the violation of which was followed by self-accusation. Even in those cases in which the increasing power of cherished corruption has deadened the moral sensibility, there is that in the

16. Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be*^m by grace; ⁿto the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham,^o who is the father of us all,

17. (As it is written, ^pI have made thee a father of many nations,) || before Him whom he believed, *even*

^m Rom. iii. 24. ⁿ Gal. iii. 22. ^o Isa. li. 2; Rom. ix. 8.

^p Gen. xvii. 5. || Or, *like unto Him*.

human breast which attests the reality of a moral administration exercised over man by God.

Verse 16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; &c.* Here we have the conclusion which the reasoning of the two preceding verses is designed to establish. The Apostle resumes and reiterates the sentiment implied in verse 13, that the fulfilment of the promise of blessing—blessing most rich and ample, and meeting all the wants of our common humanity—is made to depend on *faith*, as that which essentially belongs to an economy of *grace*. And thus, he maintains, the promise stands *firm* to *all* the spiritual seed of Abraham,—not only to those who share with him in the distinguishing rite of the ancient covenant, but to those who only tread in the steps of his faith. All true believers may look up to him as their father, and claim, in virtue of the promise made to him, a rich heritage of blessing.

Verse 17. (*As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations.*) This, as we have seen, was the promise given by God to Abraham, in connection with the institution of circumcision, and made specially prominent by the change of his name from Abram to Abraham. It was on this promise, combined with another, that the Apostle had

God, *†*who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those *†*things which be not as though they were.

q Rom. viii. 11; Ephes. ii. 1, 5. *r* Rom. ix. 26; 1 Cor. i. 28;
1 Peter ii. 10.

been arguing from verse 13 to verse 15; and now, as he is about to close this branch of his reasoning, he most appropriately recalls it, in proof of the sentiment, that before God Abraham stands as the father of all true believers in every succeeding age. So great was the honour conferred on him who, reposing simply on the Divine fidelity and love, waited, year after year, for the fulfilment of the promise, until the strength of nature was gone, and then, through a special interposition of the Divine energy, realised the accomplishment of his hopes, and rejoiced in the unfolding of the Divine scheme of grace.

Before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, &c. These words are obviously to be connected with the closing remark of verse 16, "Who is the father of us all," the intervening citation of the promise being in a parenthesis. Beautiful is the conception which the Apostle here places before us. To the mind of God, when, in connection with the approaching gift of Isaac, He affirmed to Abraham, "A father of many nations have I made thee," there were present *successive generations of devout and believing men*, who should, like Abraham, be accepted through faith, and especially the generations who, under the gospel, should embrace the offered Saviour, and enjoy righteousness and life in Him. These would rise up in virtue of a Divine power diffused through their souls, quickening them to spiritual life, and leading them to stand forth as the witnesses and people of God. That energy

18. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, *So shall thy seed be.

s Gen. xv. 5.

which was now about to interpose to fulfil the promise, notwithstanding that Abraham and Sarah were as dead, in relation to the hope of children, would be the pledge of a power which, throughout successive ages, should impart spiritual life to those who had been in the coldness of death, and raise up multitudes who should share with Abraham in his spiritual heritage. The views of the patriarch himself, as to the deep import of the announcement now made to him were doubtless imperfect and obscure: but to the omniscient view of God all this was present, and Abraham stood, at that moment, as the father of millions of believers, circumcised and uncircumcised, who should be justified through that Seed of his who, in the fulness of time, should appear, and work out the redemption of our race.

Verses 18, 19. *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, &c.* In these and the two following verses, St. Paul dwells with sacred interest on the *strength* of the faith of Abraham, vividly recalling the wonderful arrangement of God, by which the fulfilment of the promise of a son by Sarah was delayed, until, in the course of nature, it had become impossible, and was then brought about in a manner designed to illustrate the putting forth of God's own life-giving energy in the case of all who should rise up as Abraham's spiritual seed. Twenty-four years had now elapsed since the first announcement was made to this eminent patriarch, that God would make of him a great nation; and about four-

19. And being not weak in faith, 'he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb :

20. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

t Gen. xvii. 17; xviii. 11; Heb. xi. 11, 12.

teen from that memorable period when his faith was re-assured, and the Divine counsel was set forth with greater explicitness,—the period in reference to which the statement is recorded, that “he believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” It was on this latter occasion that God, leading him forth by night, bade him look to the stars of heaven, which no man can number, and added, “So shall thy seed be.” But now all hope of the fulfilment of the promise, in the ordinary course of nature, was gone. Still the faith of Abraham, upheld by a Divine power, triumphed over every obstacle. “Against hope he believed in hope,” assured that the promise of God could not fail. He knew that to God nothing was impossible; and although the accomplishment of His gracious counsel required a miraculous interposition to restore the strength of nature, he was confident that such an interposition would take place. Thus his faith, sustained, through many years, amidst great discouragements, and the prolonged waiting for the promised good, rose, at last, to its greatest strength, and was abundantly honoured by God.

Verses 20, 21. *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, &c.* Here the Apostle enlarges on the strength of the faith of Abraham, as that which reposed, without wavering, on the power and

21. And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, "He was able also to perform.

22. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

u Ps. cxv. 3 ; Luke i. 37, 45 ; Heb. xi. 19.

faithfulness of God, in the presence of every difficulty and discouragement. And he suggests to us the admonitory reflection, that a firm and lively faith "*gives glory to God,*" since it involves a dutiful acknowledgment of His glorious perfections. Unbelief, on the contrary, dishonours Him, as implying a distrust of His fidelity, or power, or love. When God has given to us an explicit promise, it becomes us to lay hold of it, and to plead it before Him with a confident expectation of its fulfilment. But, alas ! our desire of spiritual blessings is often too languid, and our realising apprehension of the Divine agency too feeble, for us thus to plead with Him. Let us seek an increase of faith ; and let us ever remember that we give glory to God when we are fully assured that He will do as He has said, and when we commit ourselves, with all our interests and hopes, to His plan of grace.

Verse 22. *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.* This remark suggests the important truth, that it was through the continued exercise of faith, on the part of Abraham, that righteousness was still imputed to him. It was thus that he *stood* in the Divine favour. The means of his acceptance never varied. Fourteen years before this he "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness ;" and still he was accepted through his faith,—that faith which clung to the Divine engagements with himself, bound up, as they were, with the Divine scheme of mercy to the world.

23. Now ^{*}it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him ;

24. But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed,

x Rom. xv. 4; 1 Cor. x. 6, 11.

Verses 23, 24. *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, &c.* Here, by an easy and beautiful transition of thought, St. Paul connects the brief intimation of the ancient Scriptures respecting the justification of Abraham with the position and hopes of believers under the gospel. He reminds us that the entire history of God's dealings with that eminent patriarch, the father of all the faithful, has a *deep interest* for us who live under the full and explicit development of the Divine counsel. The economy of mercy, though at that time only partially disclosed, proceeded upon those principles, and presented those features, which it is our privilege to trace in their clear and perfect form. We are to be accounted righteous in the same way in which Abraham was accounted righteous. Our justification, like his, is to be gratuitous; our justification, like his, is to be through faith. But while the faith of Abraham went forward to the coming Saviour, of whom his Isaac was to be the ancestor and type, our faith connects the promise of blessing with Him who has actually appeared, and who, after dying for our sins, has been raised from the dead by the Eternal Father, and is thus set forth as the Mediator who has offered a perfect atonement, and opened to all believers the way of righteousness and life. An important and encouraging train of thought is suggested by the mode in which the Apostle here describes justifying faith. At the first view, indeed, it may seem strange, that he should represent that faith as directed to the Father, considered

if we believe ⁱⁿ on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

y Acts ii. 21; xiii. 30.

as having raised up the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead: but we have only to look a little deeper into the import of his language, and to bear in mind his settled habits of thought, to perceive the beauty and force of this variation. It may be assumed as certain, that St. Paul ever regarded the Lord Jesus as *the Object* of trust for acceptance with the Father; and that, in contemplating Him, he gave prominence to His *sacrificial death*. This is implied in the words that immediately follow; and it is explicitly asserted in his formal statement of the method and ground of justification in iii. 24—26. But he never lost sight of the fact, that the Lord Jesus thus suffered for sin *in fulfilment of the Father's counsel*, and he delighted to dwell on our Lord's *resurrection*, as the Father's solemn declaration, that the work of atonement was accomplished, and that the way was open to the justification of all who should confide in the appointed Saviour. One aspect, therefore, in which faith may be properly regarded is, that it is an acceptance of this counsel of the Eternal Father, and a reliance on His announcement of the completeness and sufficiency of the atonement made by the death of Jesus. In the presence of the great fact, that the Father hath "raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead," all doubt and misgiving may well be put aside, and with humble confidence we may commit our souls to Him whose claims the Father has vindicated, and whose vicarious sufferings He has declared to be efficacious and accepted.

Verse 25. *Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.* This verse evidently

25. *Who was delivered for our offences, and "was

z Isa. liii. 5. 6; Rom. iii. 25; v. 6; viii. 32; 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. i. 4;
 Heb. ix. 28; 1 Peter ii. 24; iii. 18.
 α 1 Cor. xv. 17; 1 Peter i. 21.

stands in an intimate relation to the preceding one, and affirms the truths which are necessary to bring out its depth of meaning. Nor is it possible for us to over-estimate the importance of its two brief statements. The Lord Jesus, we are taught, "was delivered for our offences." He was "*delivered*,"—*given up* to death,—in fulfilment of the scheme of God for man's salvation. His death was not fortuitous; but, though brought about by the malice and wickedness of men, it involved the accomplishment of a Divine purpose. (Acts ii. 23; Rom. viii. 32.) And He was thus "*delivered on account of our offences*." Having voluntarily taken the place of the guilty, He endured for us *penal suffering and death*. He placed Himself beneath the curse which our transgressions had brought down, that He might rescue us from that curse, and introduce us to a state of acceptance and peace. And He "*was raised again for our justification*." This clause suggests a most precious truth, and one which explains the peculiar phraseology of St. Paul in the preceding verse. The literal rendering is, "*and was raised again on account of our justification*;" for it would be doing violence to the Apostle's language to regard the preposition *διὰ* as having a perfectly different import in the two clauses, "Who was delivered for our offences" (*διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν*), "*and was raised again for our justification*" (*διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν*). To suppose that in the former it means "*on account of*," and in the latter "*in order to*," would be to violate all consistency. The sentiment of the Apostle appears to be, that the Lord Jesus was raised again, inasmuch as His atonement had

raised again for our justification.

fully availed for the justification of all who should trust in Him. His resurrection was the Father's declaration that His vicarious death had accomplished its great purpose, and that no more penal suffering remained to be undergone by Him as our Representative and Substitute. This exposition embraces, we conceive, all that the Apostle's words legitimately imply. The *ground* of our justification was shown to be complete by our Lord's coming forth from the sepulchre, though our *individual* experience of the justification thus provided for is dependent upon our individual faith, as that which appropriates His sacrifice, and savingly unites us to Him. With what hallowed joy, then, may we stand at the vacant sepulchre of our Lord! He who submitted to death on account of our offences has, by that one sacrifice of Himself, met the claims of the Divine government, and now He has come forth as the triumphant Mediator, to open to His people the path of righteousness and life!

CHAPTER V.

1. THEREFORE "being justified by faith, we have

a Isa. xxxii. 17; John xvi. 33; Rom. iii. 28, 30.

CHAPTER V.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

IN this chapter the Apostle first dwells on the *privileges* and *blessings* consequent on the justification which is through faith. He adverts to the peace with God, and the intimate access to Him, which justified persons enjoy, to their exulting hope of everlasting glory, and to the subordination even of earthly trials and afflictions to the deepening of their piety, and the increase of their spiritual consolations. Then he passes to the *greatness* of that *love of God to us* in which all these blessings originate. That love has its brightest manifestation in the gift of the Son to redeem us, while yet we were hostile to His government, and lying under His judicial displeasure; and the privileges to which it has now raised us form a pledge of our ultimate and everlasting triumph, while the glorious life of Him who submitted to death for us assures us that He will save us to the uttermost, and raise us to a participation of His glory.

St. Paul next proceeds to illustrate and confirm the doctrine of gratuitous salvation through the righteousness and sacrifice of Another, by a reference to the analogous case of the diffusion of sin and death through the whole human family by means of the original transgression. He points out the correspondence between Adam and our

peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

b Ephes. ii. 14 ; Col. i. 20.

Lord Jesus Christ, each of whom stood as the Head and Representative of the race ; and he contrasts the effects of the one transgression of the former with the benefits which flow from the gracious provision of a Mediator through whom salvation is imparted as a free gift. He shows us, in particular, that through the first offence we are subjected to condemnation, and involved in spiritual death, while the body also is brought under the stern law of mortality ; and then he shows us that, through the obedience unto death of "the Second Man," the way is opened to our justification, to our possession of spiritual life on earth, and to our ultimate attainment of the perfect life and glory of the heavenly state. Thus the Divine scheme of grace in Christ fully meets the requirements of our case, while the blessings which flow from it to every believer transcend immeasurably the evils brought upon our world by the first transgression.

Verse 1. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God &c.* It is instructive to observe, that St. Paul here recognises the justification of each individual Christian, through faith in the Lord Jesus, as constituting an important event in his religious history. Up to the point of an actual closure with Christ, so as to be accepted of the Father through Him, our state, however hopeful, and however marked by incipient gracious feeling, is one of condemnation. Then only do we come into a right position towards the Divine government, when, embracing the Lord Jesus, and relying alone on His perfect sacrifice, we are accounted righteous, according to that gracious con-

2. 'By whom also we have access by faith into this

c John x. 9 ; xiv. 6 ; Ephes. ii. 18 ; iii. 12 ; Heb. x. 19.

stitution which God has established. But *then* we have "*peace with God.*" All opposition between us and the Eternal Father now ceases. His law no longer condemns us. The terrors of His justice no longer appal us. God, as the righteous Governor of the universe, is for us and not against us. And thus all the dispensations of His providence are directed to our real and permanent welfare. Our earthly comforts are without that blight which rested upon them, when we sought in them our happiness and our all ; while our earthly trials and sufferings are subordinated to our advancement in holiness, and our perfect maturity for the glories of the Saviour's presence. "Through our Lord Jesus Christ" we are now at peace with God, and all His perfections have a favourable aspect towards us.

Verse 2. *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.* Here the Apostle presents to us a second view of the high privileges of believers. Not only has all opposition between us and the Divine government ceased, upon our being accepted in Christ, but we have been introduced by the Lord Jesus into a state in which we live and walk under the Father's smile. We have *intercourse* with God ; and that intercourse is marked on His part by *complacency* and *favour*. Jesus, as the Mediator, has brought us, as it were, into the Father's presence ; and our communion with Him is tranquillising and joyous, since He assures us of His grace and love, at the same time that He imparts to us spiritual and holy affections. And this state of grace and favour with God is designed to be *continuous*. It is our privilege to "*stand*" in it,

grace ^dwherein we stand, and ^erejoice in hope of the glory of God.

^d 1 Cor. xv. 1.

^e Heb. iii. 6.

whatever temptations may assail our faith, and whatever adverse influences may endanger our Christian principles. He who has brought us into this state assures us that He will regulate the circumstances of our probation, so that they shall never exceed the limits of our strength; and if we only cleave to Him, we shall habitually realise the gracious complacency of the Father, which, for His sake, rests on every believer.

And rejoice in hope of the glory of God. This is a third privilege of those who are in Christ. Before their view there rises a life of everlasting blessedness and triumph, in which they shall gaze upon the Divine glory, and be themselves assimilated to it, reflecting, more particularly, the dignity of the Incarnate Son. Though some shadows still rest upon the life to come, yet in its leading features, as one of perfect purity, of lofty intelligence, and of unalloyed enjoyment, as one, also, of holy triumph, and entire conformity to our glorified Lord and Head, it is distinctly placed before us; and it becomes to us an object of confident expectation, and of earnest though chastened desire. Our justification through Christ confers a *title* to that world upon which He has entered as the Head and Forerunner of His people; our habitual communion with the Father, whose gracious complacency rests on us through the Mediator, is *preparing* us to behold His glory; while the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who assures us of the Father's love, and diffuses through our souls the new life of spiritual affections, forms the *earnest* of our perfected salvation.—And in this “hope” of eternal life the

3. And not only so, but *we* glory in tribulations

f Matt. v. 11, 12; Acts v. 41; 2 Cor. xii. 10; Phil. ii. 17;
James i. 2, 12; 1 Peter iii. 14.

Christian "*glories*," or "*triumphs*," for that is the import of the word used by St. Paul. A sacred *exultation* often fills his breast as he looks forward to the future. When his earthly path lies through scenes of brightness and joy, his spiritual mind turns to a higher glory which he hopes to realise in the presence of God; and when the strength of nature fails,—as fail it must,—when bereavements leave his home comparatively desolate, and when the power of active service in the Church has ceased, he still triumphs in that Saviour who has opened to him the way to the Father's presence, and in the participation of whose glory he will find the proper dignity and blessedness of his nature.

Verse 3. *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.* The mind of St. Paul kindles with holy exultation, as he dwells on the privileges of justified persons; and he now advances the startling assertion, that not only does the believer triumph in hope of the glory of God, but he triumphs even in afflictions also, since these may contribute to the maturity of his Christian principles, and consequently to his enjoyment of a richer earnest of the spiritual happiness of heaven. It is important to observe, that the Apostle uses the very same term, "glory" or "triumph," in this verse, which he had employed in the latter clause of the preceding one. And how striking is the assertion, "We glory in tribulations also," as proceeding from *his* pen! Engaged, as he was, in the active labours of the apostolate, he was exposed to continual hardship and suffering. He did not recline on a couch of ease, and

also : 'knowing that tribulation worketh patience ;

g James i. 3.

calmly speculate on the power of the truth and grace of Christ to support men under certain possible afflictions of which he had no experience : he was, to use his own expression, "alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake : " but he endured all in the confident expectation "that the life also of Jesus" would at length "be made manifest in his mortal flesh."

Knowing that tribulation worketh patience. Here the Apostle enters upon the development of the process by which afflictions may conduce to the welfare of the Christian, and may thus become an occasion even of holy triumph. No man can glory in them simply as afflictions ; but when the believer is conscious that they stand connected with a spiritual process by which his character is elevated, and all his graces attain a richer maturity, he may then legitimately triumph in them. The word "knowing" is equivalent to "because we know," and assigns the reason of the glorying just affirmed. The process itself which the Apostle traces deserves our careful attention. "Tribulation," he affirms, "worketh *patience*." This last word is very comprehensive. It includes not only sustained and un murmuring submission to suffering, but perseverance in a course of holy service, notwithstanding the obstacles which may lie in our path. Now these developments of Christian principle are called forth by tribulation. The term "worketh," which St. Paul has selected, is beautifully appropriate. It does not imply that tribulation implants, or produces, patience ; for the unregenerate mind too often frets and chafes itself under the pressure of its troubles. But it does imply

4. ^aAnd patience, experience; and experience, hope:

^b James i. 12.

that tribulation *calls it into exercise*, and thus contributes to its increase and maturity. The justified man, when smitten with affliction, or when his path of service is beset with difficulties, is thrown back on the great principles which he has thoughtfully embraced; and, seeking from God larger communications of grace, he renews the act of entire self-dedication, and gives himself up afresh to God, to *suffer*, as well as to *do*, His will.

Verse 4. *And patience, experience.* This is the second step in the process under consideration. When tribulation, instead of leading the mind to murmur against God, and abandon the path of duty, calls forth into more vigorous exercise its submission and endurance, it obtains a richer *experience* of the peace and consolation of piety. It is brought nearer and yet nearer to God, so as to attain the most tranquil confidence of His favour, and the richest communications of His sanctifying grace. Nor is this all. It gains, under the discipline of affliction, an *experimental proof* both of the faithfulness of God to His promises, and of the sufficiency of His grace for all the exigencies of this probationary life. Casting itself upon His fidelity and love, it is sustained by His invisible power; and its own experience shows it, that the truths on which it has reposed are firm and unfailing, and that in Christ there are exhaustless treasures of grace and consolation.

And experience, hope. This is the third step of the process by which afflictions may become conducive to our spiritual welfare, and may thus be regarded even with holy triumph. The hope of the Christian, as we have already

5. ⁱAnd hope maketh not ashamed ; ^kbecause the

ⁱ Phil. i. 20. ^k 2 Cor. i. 22 ; Gal. iv. 6 ; Ephes. i. 13, 14.

seen, is directed to the beholding of the Divine glory, and to the attainment of a conformity to it, as far as his nature is capable of such a conformity. But the richer his experience of the grace of God on earth, the brighter will be his anticipation of the heavenly state, and the more influential will be his desire of it. The nearer he is attracted to God in the exercise of spiritual affections, the more profoundly will he appreciate the deep and holy joys which are to be realised in His immediate presence. And the experimental proof which he has obtained of the fidelity of God, and of the sufficiency of His grace, as he has passed, with lowly submission, though the discipline of suffering, will encourage him to look forward with increased confidence to the ultimate attainment of that glory. The grace which has kept him in the hour of trial will, he is assured, still be sufficient, until, at length, he triumphs in the final struggle, and is admitted to the Saviour's joy.

Verse 5. *And hope maketh not ashamed ; because the love of God &c.* In these words St. Paul completes his glowing description of the experience of the justified man, and discloses the Source of the deep and hidden joy with which he looks forward to the future life. The hope of being with God for ever, and of reflecting His glory, is one which he hesitates not to avow. The state to which he is tending is so elevated, and pure, and blissful, that the anticipation of it may well sustain him under the sorrows and conflicts of earth. And he has already within him the *earnest* of that consummated blessedness ; so that he can now, in some degree, appreciate its excellence, while his consciousness of the Divine favour, and his rich experience of

love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

the comforting and sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, warrant the confident persuasion that he, even he, shall share the Saviour's triumph. It is agreed, among the best expositors, that the phrase, "the love of God," must be understood of *God's love to us*; and the declaration of the Apostle, that this love "is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," implies that the Holy Spirit assures us of God's paternal and complacent love in Christ Jesus. This phrase, too, marks the *abundance* of the consolation which the Spirit imparts. He "pours out," as it were, the love of God upon our souls, tinging all our emotions, and especially calling forth and sustaining a lively hope of being with Him for ever.—In this verse, as Bengel has properly remarked, we have the *first* mention of the Holy Spirit in this Epistle. His gracious operations on the mind, and especially His abiding presence in the hearts of believers, to consecrate them to God, and to form the earnest of their eternal life, are afterwards dwelt upon at length: (ch. viii. :) but in this brief statement we have the germ of the truths which are there unfolded.—Nor should we overlook the force of the expression, "the Holy Ghost which *is given unto us*." It contains an allusion to the Pentecostal fulfilment of the Saviour's promise, that, as a consequence of His glorification, He would send down the Holy Ghost in the fulness of his convincing, comforting, and sanctifying grace. The Spirit is pre-eminently Christ's *gift* to His people. And He abides in the Church. He dwells in the heart of each individual believer, disclosing to it the Father's love, and thus producing a sacred tranquillity, and imparting strength for the discharge of every duty.

6. For when we were yet without strength, ||in due time 'Christ died for the ungodly.

|| Or, *according to the time*, Gal. iv. 4. l v. 8; ch. iv. 25.

Verse 6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* The Apostle now passes to the greatness of that love of God to us of which he had just spoken, the vivid consciousness of which the Holy Spirit produces in the believing mind, so as to enable it to look forward with holy confidence and hope to the future life. He fixes, at once, upon the most august and impressive manifestation of that love,—the gift of the Son to become our Substitute, and to die for us, while we were yet sinners; and he argues that if, through the believing reception of this provision of mercy, we are now reconciled to God, surely we cannot, at last, incur His judicial displeasure; but, inasmuch as the once crucified Redeemer lives again, so we shall live through Him, and triumph in a perfect and consummated salvation.—In the verse before us, three things require to be carefully noted. First, the Apostle brings vividly before us the *moral helplessness* of man,—his utter inability to rescue or save himself,—when this Divine interposition took place on his behalf. In the next place, he adverts to the *time* of the Saviour's appearance and death,—that it was at a period when the preparatory dispensations had accomplished their intended purpose, and when, in various respects, the world was *ripe* for that great event on which the hope of man was to repose. The brief expression, "*in due time*," suggests the idea which is conveyed more fully in Gal. iv. 4, 5, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the

7. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die : yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

adoption of sons."—And, then, it becomes us to mark the distinct and emphatic manner in which St. Paul, when speaking of the death of the Lord Jesus, recognises its *vicarious* character:—"In due time Christ died *for the ungodly*." The preposition rendered "for," *ὑπέρ*, signifies, in this connection, as the eminent grammarian, Winer, has pointed out, *on behalf of* another, and *as representing* that other. Thus does it forcibly express the position of our blessed Lord in relation to "the ungodly." Though Himself pure and spotless, He became the Representative and Substitute of our sinful race, and as such died to rescue us from the death that awaited us.

Verses 7, 8. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet peradventure for a good man &c.* Here the Apostle illustrates, by a forcible comparison, the greatness of the love of God in giving His Son to die for us ; and he brings into the greatest prominence that view of the death of Jesus which he had just indicated. The course of thought which he pursues is simple and obvious. He first takes the case of "a righteous man," one strictly upright and honourable in all his dealings ; and he says, that it is scarcely to be supposed that for such a man, highly as he might be esteemed, one of his fellows would submit to death. He then takes the case of "a good man,"—one eminently benevolent and kind, who habitually sought to diffuse blessing around him, and to do good to the utmost extent of his ability. For such a man he conceives it to be possible, though not likely, that another might offer to die. Some one among the multitudes whom he had

8. But "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9. Much more then, being now justified "by His

m John xv. 13 ; 1 Peter iii. 18 ; 1 John iii. 16 ; iv. 9. 10.

n Rom. iii. 25 ; Ephes. ii. 13 ; Heb. ix. 14 ; 1 John i. 7.

relieved by his bounty might, perhaps, step forward to take his place, if death impended over him, thus manifesting the depth of his gratitude and the constancy of his regard. But then the Apostle argues, that the love of God in giving His Son to die for us, stands forth as pre-eminent and incomparable, since while we were yet *sinners* the Lord Jesus died as our Substitute.—The dearness of the Son Incarnate to the Eternal Father is a theme too lofty for the human mind to grasp. Between the Son and the Father there is an ineffable union ; and in the character of our Lord, as the Mediator, there was everything to call forth the Father's complacency. But the Father gave Him up to die for us,—for *us* who had no merit to secure His approval, no spiritual excellence to attract His complacency, and who had, indeed, openly rebelled against His government. Here was the proof of the *pitying regard* of God to our race, and of the benignity which seeks and delights in our spiritual recovery.

Verse 9. *Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.* This is the first form in which the Apostle puts the *inference* to be deduced from that transcendent display of the Divine love to us on which he had just dwelt. He has in view the issue of the Christian's probation,—the momentous crisis when he will enter upon the unseen world, to receive the retribution of eternity. To the man who stands aloof from Christ, that crisis will be one of overwhelming terror ; for

blood, we shall be saved 'from wrath through Him.

10. For ^oif, when we were enemies, ^qwe were

^o Rom. i. 18; 1 Thess. i. 10.

^q 2 Cor. v. 18, 19; Ephes. ii. 16; Col. i. 20, 21.

he will have to meet the righteous displeasure, and the penal inflictions, of Him who sits upon the throne of the Universe, whose laws he has violated, and whose provision of grace he has neglected. But no "*wrath*" can light upon the man who has embraced the atonement, and who, through the "blood" of Jesus, has been accounted righteous. To him the Divine government is no longer one of terror; to him the prospect of eternity ceases to be appalling. Nay, more: his *justification* confers a *right* to eternal life,—an evangelical right, indeed, since his justification is itself gratuitous, and is founded on an economy of grace as well as of righteousness; but still a right which the essential principles of the Divine government recognise and maintain. The penal inflictions of the Divine displeasure cannot, therefore, fall on him: but scenes of brightness open to his view, and he may even "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Verse 10. *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, &c.* Here the grand conclusion which the Apostle has reached is presented in a yet more impressive form; and an additional element is brought in, to show how firm is the ground on which the Christian's hope reposes, and how glorious is the object to which it is directed. The Incarnate Son of God, once given up to death for us, and having by that death opened the way to our reconciliation with the Father, now *lives* as the exalted Mediator. From Him there flows forth a hidden life to all His believing people,—a *life* which no

reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved ^rby His life.

11. And not only *so*, but we also ^sjoy in God

^r John v. 26 ; xiv. 19 ; 2 Cor. iv. 10, 11.

^s Rom. ii. 17 ; iii. 29, 30 ; Gal. iv. 9.

earthly changes can impair, and which the stroke of death itself cannot touch. His glorious life, too, is the *pledge* of the consummated blessedness of His people ; for He has led the way to the Father's presence, as the Forerunner of all His saints. "Because I live," He has said, "ye shall live also."—And, yet further, His life is one of powerful and efficient *action* on behalf of His people. He administers the whole economy of grace. He rules in providence, and subordinates the whole course of events to the everlasting benefit of those who cleave to Him. And He is "a Priest upon His throne," ever presenting Himself to the Father as our Representative, and dispensing, as the result of His sacrifice, the richest blessings. Thus does *the life* of the Lord Jesus assure us, if we only continue to look to Him, of perfect and consummated *salvation*. He will lead us onward through all the conflicts and sorrows of earth ; He will give us victory over the last enemy ; and, as the spiritual world bursts upon our view, we shall be welcomed as His "saved" people, whose blessedness is now secure, and who only await the resurrection of the body to complete our assimilation to Him, and our participation of His triumph.

Verse 11. *And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* There is an intimate connection between this verse and the preceding one. The Apostle marks the completeness and glory of the final salvation of

through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the ||atone^{ment}.

|| Or, *reconciliation*, v. 10; 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

the Christian, by affirming that it will involve a *holy triumphing in God* through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is to be regretted that the participial form of the word *καυχώμενοι*, "glorying," or "triumphing," was not here retained by our translators; since the rendering, "we joy," obscures the relation of the sentiment now advanced to that which the Apostle had just uttered. Fixing his regard on the state of believers as now justified through the blood of Jesus, and *reconciled* to God, so that all His attributes have a favourable aspect towards them, and the whole of His administration is directed to their welfare,—contemplating, also, their interest in the glorious life of their risen Lord,—he affirms, that not only shall they be saved at last, but that their entrance upon eternal life shall be one of holy triumph, that it will involve sacred exultation in God, whose abounding love in Christ Jesus has given them the victory over every opposing power. But, in order that we may *individually* realise this triumphant issue of our probationary life, it is necessary that we should "abide" in Christ, and cherish that hidden life which His Spirit imparts. St. Paul does not, indeed, mention this in this passage; but we are fully justified in regarding it as implied. For in other passages of this very Epistle he lays stress on this consideration. It will suffice to quote one remarkable instance:—"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh: for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (viii. 12, 13.)

12. Wherefore, as 'by one man sin entered into

† Gen. iii. 6; 1 Cor. xv. 21.

Verse 12. *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* The truths which St. Paul had now unfolded, relative to the fulness of blessing which flows to all believers from the Lord Jesus Christ, led him to dwell on the *analogy* of the Divine procedures in dealing with our race. He refers to the universal diffusion of sin and death as the result of the transgression of him who stood as the first head and representative of mankind; and then he places in contrast with this the free offer of justification and life to all men, on the ground of the obedience unto death of ONE GLORIOUS PERSON, through whom the fatal effects of the fall may be more than repaired, and a state of glory be realised to which otherwise we could never have attained.—The ellipsis in this verse may be better supplied at the commencement than at the end:—"Wherefore," *i.e.*, such being the provisions of grace, and such the fulness of salvation by Christ,—it is, in regard of this constitution, "just as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Here the Apostle lays down a general position, which he proceeds to illustrate and confirm. Several things in this verse claim special attention. The statement, "By one man sin entered into the world," does not mean that the sin of Adam was the first act of transgression upon earth,—for, indeed, the sin of Eve preceded it,—but, rather, that through Adam sin found an entrance into this world, so as to *establish itself in it*, and so as to *affect the whole human family*.—The next assertion is, that "death entered by sin." This

the world, and *death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, ||for that all have sinned :

* Gen. ii. 17 ; Rom. vi. 23 ; 1 Cor. xv. 21. || Or, *in whom*.

remark is evidently limited, by the immediate context, to *mankind* ; and, when thus applied, it has a fearful depth of meaning. It includes the death of the body ; but it implies also the loss of spiritual life, and exposure to everlasting ruin,—the hopeless separation of the soul from God and from all enjoyment. If we would, indeed, enter into St. Paul's train of thought, when he thus connects sin and death, we must not overlook the solemn and emphatic manner in which he says, when adverting to the eternal condition of those who practise iniquity,—“For the end of those things is *death*,” (vi. 21,) or the equally emphatic manner in which he affirms of the present state of those who are destitute of the life-giving energy of the Spirit of Christ,—“For to be carnally minded is *death*.” (viii. 6.) In regard to the death of the body, this assertion, as we have said, must be confined to the human family. It is of men only that St. Paul is here speaking ; and we are left at perfect liberty to suppose, that death may have been the law under which the inferior animals were called into being. In the case of man, death has a peculiar character, and the anticipation of it awakens peculiar emotions. There is an instinctive recoil from it in our very nature ; it is a painful and humiliating change ; and too often the anticipation of it makes our present life one of distressing bondage.—Still further, as the Apostle looked upon this world, into which sin had entered through one man, and established itself, bringing death in its train, he saw that *the evil and the penalty were everywhere diffused*. “And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

13. (For until the law sin was in the world: but
 *sin is not imputed when there is no law.

• Rom. iv. 15; 1 John iii. 4.

Every man, in his natural state, and apart from the provision of grace in Christ, is not only subjected to the stern law of mortality, but is in a state of spiritual death, and stands exposed to everlasting separation from God. It is difficult to represent the full force of the expression which we render "passed upon all men," *εις πάντας ανθρώπους διήλθεν*. It marks death as *penetrating through the whole human family*, so as to *reach every individual of the race*. And to make this sentiment clearer and more distinct, the Apostle adds, "For that all have sinned." Some of the earlier expositors, among whom we may mention Origen and the great Augustine, as well as some in our own day, translate the clause, *ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον*, "*in whom all sinned*," referring the expression to Adam, and regarding the Apostle as distinctly affirming that all men, in one sense, sinned in him. The common rendering, however, is certainly the more accurate one, and expresses more clearly the meaning of St. Paul. Everywhere, looking upon man separately from the work of Christ, he saw *death*, the sum of all penal evils; everywhere he traced *sin* as the *cause* of death. But the term "have sinned," or simply "sinned," must be here taken in a very comprehensive sense. It includes the *inward state of sin*,—such a state as must exist if the soul is destitute of spiritual life, even before the putting forth of unholy principles in voluntary acts. It includes, also, in the case of those who are capable of it, the actual commission of iniquity. Thus sin, which entered into the world through the transgression of Adam, has diffused itself so as to affect all his descendants.

Verses 13, 14. *For until the law sin was in the world:*

14. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the

but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, &c. In these verses, which stand in a most intimate relation to each other, St. Paul amplifies and confirms the thought which he had briefly expressed in the statement, that "death passed upon all men, for that all sinned." He glances at the state of mankind before the written revelation was given; and he affirms that this whole period, "from Adam to Moses," was one of sin and death. Subsequently, in verse 20, he adverts to the period which intervened between the giving of the law and the coming of the promised Restorer; and affirms that this period was one of yet more abounding sinfulness and of still deeper guilt,—the explicit revelation of the Divine will placing sin in the clearest light, and too often calling forth a more decided resistance to restraint. It is on the former of these periods that we have now to dwell. There can be no question that when the Apostle says, "Until the law," or "Up to the time of the law," he refers to the Mosaic law; for this is obvious from his subsequent words, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses." During all that period, then, "sin was in the world," and it diffused itself universally among men. Nor was this all. *The reign of death*, during that period, even over those who were sinful by nature, but who had not, like Adam, deliberately transgressed a Divine command, being as yet in infancy or early childhood,—and over those, also, who, though arrived at mature age, had not transgressed positive injunctions of God given by explicit revelation, but had done violence to the intimations of right which the admonitions of conscience afforded,—the

similitude of Adam's transgression, "who is the figure of Him that was to come.

y 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22, 45.

reign of death over all these proved that sin not only existed, but was *imputed*. This we conceive to be the sentiment which the Apostle here affirms. He lays down, indeed, the general principle, that in the absence of *all* law sin is not imputed, just as he had said in iv. 15, putting an hypothetical case, "Where no law is, there is no transgression:" but then he goes on to argue, that even before the Mosaic economy was introduced, and an explicit revelation was given, mankind were really under law,—*under a constitution which recognised sin, and visited it with penal inflictions*. And the proof of this was, that "death," even then, everywhere "reigned." Everywhere men succumbed to that law of mortality from which they yet recoiled; everywhere, too, spiritual death made itself felt; and it was only as the provision of grace through the coming Mediator came into operation, and the Spirit of Christ diffused a measure of spiritual life through those who repelled not His gracious strivings, that this state of gloom was relieved, and rays of brightness gladdened our earth.—The mention of "Adam's transgression," in the development of this argument, led the Apostle to add, "Who is the figure," or "type," "of Him that was to come." Here, in express terms, he affirms that there was a *correspondence*, in some important respects, between Adam and our blessed Lord, at the same time that there was a marked and decided *contrast* between the effects of their having appeared on earth. Each of them stood as the Head and Representative of mankind under a constitution of law. The transgression of the one, and the mediatorial

15. But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded 'unto many.

16. And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the

s Isa. liii. 11; Matt. xx. 28; xxvi. 28.

righteousness of the Other,—His obedience even unto death,—reached far beyond themselves. From the one condemnation and death—death in all its terrible import and extent—pass to all his descendants: through the Other, the way is opened to the gratuitous justification of all who embrace the offered mercy, (verse 17,) spiritual life takes the place of coldness and torpor, and at length the justified man enters upon eternal life,—a life which can never fail or become feeble, and the holy joys of which can never be impaired.

Verse 15. *But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one &c.* Here the Apostle marks the *first* point of distinction between the effects of the sin of Adam and those of the mediatorial righteousness of our Lord. Both, indeed, reach to "the many;" the one diffusing death, the other imparting righteousness as a *free gift*, according to the *gracious counsel of the Divine mind*. But the scheme of grace is so *rich* in blessing, that it provides for *much more* than the mere reversal of the death which came to us through Adam. There is a *fulness* of life, an exhaustless and unending treasure of privilege and glory, offered to us through Jesus Christ, and freely bestowed upon us when we are united to Him by faith.

Verse 16. *And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, &c.* This

gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification.

17. For if ||by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of

|| Or, *by one offence.*

is the *second* point of distinction alleged by the Apostle. Through the *one offence* of Adam, the righteous sentence of God came upon mankind; the penal consequences of his transgression reached to the whole human family, so as to subject them to condemnation, and involve them in spiritual death: but the gracious bestowment of God in Christ not only reverses the condemnation thus incurred, in the case of all who embrace the provisions of mercy, but avails to the cancelling of *our own multiplied offences*. Nay, more: if, after "tasting that the Lord is gracious," and rejoicing in the freedom from condemnation which belongs to those who are in Christ Jesus, we should again give place to sin, and bring guilt upon our souls, that guilt may be cancelled, and the light of the Divine countenance may again gladden us. The grace of God in Christ, while it seeks our restoration to holiness, can meet the case even of backsliders. It invites their return, and opens to them the way of deliverance and peace.

Verse 17. *For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace &c.* There is an obvious similarity between the sentiment of this verse and that of verse 15; but the surpassing fulness and glory of the blessings which flow to believers through Christ are here brought out in a far more striking manner than in any preceding part of this argument. Through the offence of him who stood as the first head and representative of his race, "death reigned." Its dominion was

grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ.)

18. Therefore as || by the offence of one *judgment*

|| Or, *by one offence.*

extended over mankind, holding them in bondage, and casting gloom over their prospects of the future. But the dominion of death is done away in the case of all who, embracing the Saviour, receive the abounding grace of God, and rejoice in the possession of righteousness as a free gift. These enter, even here, upon a state of life which the stroke of death cannot impair. Their hearts already glow with that spiritual life which the Spirit of Christ imparts, and which forms the earnest of their eternal triumph. And at length that perfect triumph shall come. They "*shall reign in life,*"—the very life for which their nature has been formed, a life which, while it fills and expands the soul, pervades even the body, and renders it imperishable and glorious. And they "*shall reign in life,*"—enjoying the highest dignity, controlling, by the inward power imparted to them, every energy of their being and directing it to the noblest ends, and rejoicing in the subjection of all the spiritual foes who sought their ruin. But this fulness of life, and this holy dominion, are to be ascribed, not to themselves, but to the "One" who stands at their head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as the "death" which darkens our earth resulted from one man; so the present life of believers, and their glorious and everlasting triumph, are to be referred to HIM who in their stead was obedient unto death, and through whom they now "receive the gift of righteousness."

Verse 18. *Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One &c.* In this verse St. Paul resumes the comparison

came upon all men to condemnation; even so ||by the

|| Or, *by one righteousness.*

which he had commenced in verse 12, and sums up the general results of his argument. The terms which he has selected merit our most careful attention. There can be little question that the marginal renderings, "by one offence," and "by one righteousness," express more accurately the import of the original phrases than those given in the text. It is important to observe, also, that the expressions, "judgment came," and "the free gift came," have been inserted by our translators to supply an ellipsis; so that no argument can be founded upon them, and it may indeed be questioned whether they do not, to some extent, obscure the precise sentiments of the Apostle. Literally translated, his words are, "Therefore as by one offence unto all men to condemnation, even so by one righteousness unto all men to justification of life." To us there seem weighty reasons why he adopted this *general* and *very peculiar* form of expression. On the one hand, he wished to mark the fact, that the effects of the first transgression, and those of the mediatorial righteousness of the Lord Jesus, reach to *all men*; and he wished also to make prominent the truth, that whereas the sin of Adam involved all men in *condemnation*, the work of the Lord Jesus opened to all men the way of *justification*, and that justification connected with an inward *life*, which shall ultimately develop itself amidst the glories of a higher state. But, on the other hand, he did not mean to affirm that through the work of Christ *all men* are *actually* justified. The very guarded manner in which he speaks in the preceding verse of those who shall triumph through Christ, "Much more *they which receive* abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One,

righteousness of One *the free gift came* "upon all men unto justification of life.

a John xii. 32; Heb. ii. 9.

Jesus Christ,"—should, of itself, shut out this supposition; and, throughout this Epistle, he affirms that, on the part of all to whom Christ is made known, a self-renouncing faith in Him is the *condition* of justification. Now the latter clause of this verse, "even so by one righteousness unto all men to justification of life," beautifully expresses the bearing of the work and sacrifice of Christ on the position of men. It teaches us that, through the mediatorial righteousness of the Lord Jesus,—a righteousness completed by His sacrificial death,—the way of justification and life is opened to all men, and the condemnation induced by the first offence is so met that no man will perish *merely* through the sin of Adam. The argument which some have based upon the strong words of our Version, "the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life," to prove the *actual justification* of all infants coming into our world is not sustained, we conceive, by the Apostle's words, when they are viewed in their own guarded character. It is, indeed, a precious truth, that the provisions of redemption meet us as we come into this world; that our position is graciously affected, *from the very first*, by the work of the Lord Jesus; and it is certain that in the case of all who die in infancy the provisions of grace hold fully and absolutely. But the Apostle does not affirm, in this verse, the actual justification of all men as the result of the interposition of Christ. His language, indeed, is purposely chosen to shut out that idea, and yet to show the *amplitude* and *universality* of the provision made for our recovery. *All* are placed under an economy of grace, though some, alas! reject its overtures, and

19. For as by one man's disobedience many were

stand aloof from its blessings. *How* the benefits of the death of Christ affect all men, in their infinitely diversified circumstances of moral probation, is a subject beyond our full apprehension. The case of those who die in infancy is plain: they are justified and have eternal life in Christ. The case of those adults who have never heard of the Saviour we must leave to Him who only can apply to their varying position and character the principles of His government, which is now one of grace through Christ, while yet it is one of righteous retribution. But as to all who live to years of moral action, and to whom the Lord Jesus has been made known, *their* justification depends, as the whole tenor of this Epistle shows, on their personal coming to Him by faith. It is by embracing Christ, and especially by appropriating His sacrifice, that we are united to Him, and obtain a personal and saving interest in His mediatorial righteousness.

Verse 19. *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.* Here the Apostle dwells on the contrast between the *actual effect* of the sin of Adam on his descendants, and the *actual effect* of the work of Christ, to be realised in successive ages by all who embrace Him. There is an obvious reason why he changes the expression "all men," which he had used in the preceding verse, to "the many," which he here employs. He could not affirm that through Christ *all men* "shall be made righteous," since multitudes reject the provisions of mercy. The very same considerations which induced him to employ the very peculiar and carefully guarded phraseology of the preceding verse, led him to adopt the variation to which we refer. As he concludes his comparison between Adam and the

made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.

Lord Jesus Christ, he fixes our regard on the "disobedience" of the one as affecting the multitudes of his descendants, and "constituting them sinners,"—involving them in *condemnation*, as well as in inward *depravity*; and he dwells on the "obedience" of the Other as affecting vast multitudes of every age, who should attain through it *righteousness* and *life*. The comparison is made as strict as the nature of the case admits; while the error, that all men shall be justified through Christ, however they may treat His offers of grace, is carefully guarded against.—We must not overlook the manner in which the Apostle refers to "*the obedience*" of Christ as the ground of righteousness to those who believe in Him, just as in the preceding verse he had placed the "one righteousness" of our Lord and Saviour in contrast with the "one offence" through which we all fell. But it would be an error to maintain, that our justification is solely through the *active* obedience of our Lord, as distinguished from His sacrificial death. This, indeed, would be to contradict the explicit statements of St. Paul in this very chapter, not to refer to innumerable other portions of the New Testament. In verses 9, 10, he affirms that we are "justified by *the blood*" of Christ, and that we are "reconciled to God by *the death* of His Son." The obedience of our Lord, through which righteousness is imputed to us, was consummated by His submission to death, as the Representative of our sinful race. St. Paul has shed light on this subject by his memorable declaration in his Epistle to the Philippians, (ii. 5—8,) that He who had "subsisted in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God," "emptied

20. Moreover ^bthe law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much ^cmore abound :

^b John xv. 22; Rom. iii. 20; iv. 15; vii. 8; Gal. iii. 19, 23.

^c Luke vii. 47; 1 Tim. i. 14.

Himself, taking the form of *a servant*, being made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, He *became obedient unto death*, even the death of the cross." Thus he teaches us, that the Lord Jesus, the Son Incarnate, came into this world under a constitution which bound Him to obedience, and required of Him human righteousness; and as He had voluntarily become our Representative and Substitute, it was essential that He should die for us a penal death. We cannot separate, then, the active obedience of the Saviour during His earthly course, and His passive obedience when for us He surrendered Himself to the extremity of anguish, and yielded up His life amidst the agonies of the cross. In the character which He sustained, that deep and bitter suffering, and that violent and ignominious death, were essential to the completeness of his obedience,—not only as the highest proof of self-sacrifice, but especially as that which was required by His being "made under the law," and subjecting Himself to its curse and penalty, that He might "redeem" us whom that law "held" and condemned.

Verse 20. *Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, &c.* There is an allusion, in the first of these statements, to the remark in verse 13, "For until the law sin was in the world." In that remark, and in the argument of the verse that followed it, St. Paul had represented the state of the world from Adam until the giving of the Mosaic law, as one charac-

21. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so

terised by the universal diffusion of sin, and the universal triumph of death. Here he affirms, in effect, that the introduction of the Mosaic law, so far from repairing the ruin of mankind, tended, through their depravity and perverseness, to *augment transgression*. The effect—not, indeed, the designed, but the foreseen and certain, effect—of the law, with its clearer and more definite statements of duty, was not merely to increase responsibility, but to call forth, in many instances, stronger resistance to God, and greater dislike of moral restraint. The word which the Apostle selects is very expressive. “The law entered,”—literally, it “*came in between*,” as an intermediate part of the Divine arrangements. It was not itself the remedy for man’s ruin; it served, on the contrary, more clearly and fully to evince his guilt; but its types pointed him to a future Restorer through whom a fulness of grace should be vouchsafed to every believer. And now that Redeemer has come; and the *abounding* of Divine grace through Him can meet the case of the multiplied transgressions of men, can erase the deepest stains of guilt, and can raise and ennoble that nature which sin has degraded and defiled.

Verse 21. *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness &c.* In these comprehensive words, the Apostle sets forth, with holy triumph, the complete and surpassing provision which has been made, through Christ, for the recovery and glorification of man. In our fallen state “*sin reigns*;” it triumphs over us, and holds us captive, baffling all mere provisions of law: and it reigns “*unto death*,” or, more literally, “*in death*;” it holds us in a state of spiritual death, destitute of the inward life of pure and spiritual affections, and it is leading us onward to a state of everlasting separation from God.

might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

But now, through the Lord Jesus Christ, *the grace of God* flows forth to us; and, rescuing us, upon our believing in Him, from the dominion of sin, and from death as its accompaniment and result, it "*reigns*," conferring the richest blessings, and moulding our hearts into a conformity to the Divine will. It leads us to the actual enjoyment of "righteousness," as a free gift through the Redeemer; and thus it confers a title to eternal life. Even now the beginning of that life is imparted to our souls. Accounted righteous for the sake of Christ, we receive the Holy Ghost as the Comforter and the Sanctifier, and thus have within us "the earnest of our inheritance;" and now all the discipline of Providence, and all the operations of the Spirit's hidden power, are directed to our ultimate enjoyment of the Divine presence, and our participation of the Saviour's triumph. The overflowing grace of God, while it establishes within the breast, even here, a reign of peace and purity, contemplates nothing less than the eternal glorification of our entire nature with HIM who has bought us with His blood, and in the reflection of whose perfect loveliness we shall find our highest dignity and joy.

CHAPTER VI.

1. WHAT shall we say then ? "Shall we continue

a Rom. iii. 8 ; vi. 15.

CHAPTER VI.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

IN unfolding the Christian scheme of salvation, St. Paul had now established the doctrine of gratuitous justification through faith in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, and had shown how the provisions of grace in Him meet the case of man as involved in condemnation and death by the offence of Adam, and open even to those whose personal transgressions have been multiplied and flagrant the path of life. This doctrine, however, like all other great and precious truths, is liable to be perverted and abused ; and against the most fatal perversion of it—that men may safely, or, at least, without any great danger, continue in sin, that the grace of God in Christ may more and more abound towards them—he now enters a solemn and decided protest.

The first ground on which he bases his indignant re-monstrance against such an abuse of the mercy of the gospel is, that all who are really Christ's *are dead to sin*. This is the *general* position which he assumes ; and then he goes on to show, that all who truly receive the Lord Jesus, confessing Him also by being baptized in His name, *share in His death and resurrection* ;—that in virtue of their *union with Him*, they as truly die in relation to sin, as He died in relation to it, and that they as truly become the subjects of a new inward life, as He entered upon a new

in sin, that grace may abound ?

life, when, as the Mediator who had fully accomplished the work of atonement, He rose again from the dead. On these truths he founds an earnest exhortation to all Christians to resist every tendency and allurements to sin, and to devote themselves unreservedly to the service of God.

The Apostle next proceeds to refute the antinomian perversion of the doctrine of grace on another ground. He calls upon those who might be disposed to allow themselves in sin, because they are placed under an economy of mercy, to reflect seriously on their actual position and prospects. The real character of a man, he affirms, is to be determined by the course of conduct which he voluntarily chooses and strives after; so that if a man *yields himself* to the dominion of sin, his state must be one of *subjection to its penalty*. This train of thought leads him to draw a striking contrast between the servants of sin, for whom are reserved the "wages" of "death," and the true people of God, who, being rescued from the thralldom of sin, and being consecrated to the Divine service, walk even here in the path of holiness, and will attain, at length, everlasting life.

Verse 1. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* In these words the Apostle states the antinomian perversion of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, which he was about to repudiate and condemn. Such is the weakness of the human mind, and such the corruption and deceitfulness of the human heart, that the most precious truths of the gospel are liable to be abused so as to favour evils which,

2. God forbid. How shall we, that are ^b dead to

^b Rom. vi. 11; vii. 4; Gal. ii. 19; vi. 14; Col. iii. 3; 1 Peter ii. 24.

when rightly viewed, they are calculated to counteract and destroy. All the provisions of redemption tend to illustrate the hatefulness of sin in the sight of God, and to "establish the law," the claims of which have been vindicated and honoured by the offering up of our Representative and Substitute. But the Apostle perceived that some, overlooking the moral lessons taught by the atonement, and simply taking hold of the fact, that righteousness is now offered to us as a *free gift* through Christ, might attempt to blend a Christian profession with the indulgence of some fascinating evils, secretly arguing that we may "continue in sin," and that the riches of Divine grace will only be the more illustriously displayed in our salvation. He was aware, too, that some of the strong expressions which he had just employed, when unfolding the work of Christ, and the benefits which flow to men through that work, might be alleged, by a perverted ingenuity, in support of the antinomian delusion. He had spoken of *the abounding of grace*,—that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;" (verse 20;) and he had affirmed that the gracious gift of God in Christ extends to *the repeated transgressions* of men, so that if, after tasting His love, we again give place to sin, even that sin may be cancelled, and we may again stand accepted in the Lord Jesus. (Verse 16.) These statements seemed to require to be guarded against the abuse to which they were liable, while yet the glorious truths which they affirmed were maintained in all their fulness. The phraseology of this verse was evidently suggested by the former of the passages just referred to.

sin, live any longer therein?

3. Know ye not, that ^cso many of us as ||were

c Gal. iii. 27. || Or, are.

Verse 2. *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* Here St. Paul first gives utterance to the pious horror with which he regarded the heresy he was about to combat. Such a perversion of the glorious doctrine of gratuitous justification justly called forth his earnest indignation; and he wished to *arouse* any who might have been misled by it from their dreams of security, and to bring them to a correct apprehension of the character and responsibilities of Christians. He then takes the general position, that *all true believers are dead to sin*, that, in virtue of their interest in their Lord's redeeming work, they are rescued from its condemning sentence, and delivered from its power; and he appeals to the Christians at Rome, whether such a state of experience is compatible with the indulgence of sin, and does not rather imply an utter renunciation of it, and a firm resistance to its allurements and assaults. The development of this thought leads the Apostle to dwell on the Saviour's death in its relation to sin, and His resurrection as the commencement of a new and glorious life, and to point out the *interest* of all true believers in these great events, and, in an important sense, their *participation* in them.

Verse 3. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?* It is of primary importance, in order to a correct exposition of the Apostle's argument in this and the following verses, to ascertain the precise application of the words, "So many of us as *were baptized into Jesus Christ*." Do these words include *all* who, by submitting to baptism, entered upon a

baptized into Jesus Christ 'were baptized into His death?

d 1 Cor. xv. 29.

Christian profession, whether penitent and believing, or, like Simon Magus, impenitent and careless; or must they be restricted to those whose open avowal of Christ in baptism was connected with a living faith in Him, either then for the first time put forth, or already exercised and enjoyed? The nature of the case and the whole constitution of the economy of salvation require, we conceive, that the latter and more restricted application should be adopted. St. Paul himself seems to suggest such a limitation by the words, "*so many of us* as were baptized into Jesus Christ:" but, independently of this, his whole argument in this Epistle shows that we cannot extend his reasoning in this passage to those whose profession of Christ was not connected with a true and lively faith in Him. If there is one point on which he had laid stress in the development of the Divine scheme of justification, it is, that personal faith in the Lord Jesus is, on the part of all adults, the condition of that justification,—that it is by a believing reception of Christ that we obtain a saving interest in His death, and in his whole redeeming work. Keeping this truth in view, we perceive the deep significance of the phrase, "*baptized into Jesus Christ.*" That phrase recognises the great truth of the believer's *union with Christ*,—a union brought about by the faith which embraces Him as the Saviour, and *openly avowed*, and, in an important sense, *completed*, in the acknowledgment of Him in the sacrament of baptism. In confirmation of these views, we turn with confidence to a similar passage in the Epistle to the Galatians. Having set forth the ruined and helpless

4. Therefore we are 'buried with Him by baptism

e Col. ii. 12.

condition of man, St. Paul there goes on to speak of "the promise by faith of Jesus Christ," as "given to them that believe;" and, after alluding to the position of the law in relation to the scheme of mercy, he adds, "But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God *by faith in Christ Jesus*. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii. 25—28.) Now this passage shows, most conclusively, that, when the Apostle speaks of "as many as have been baptized into Christ," he refers only to true believers, and that he contemplated their baptism as that which *recognised a saving union with Him, brought about by this faith*. This point being established, we gain a valuable elucidation of the general argument of the verse before us. St. Paul's first position is, that believers "are dead to sin;" and, to illustrate and confirm this, he argues that, being "baptized into Jesus Christ," so that a union, real and intimate, though not perceptible to the eye of sense, is established between them and Him, and is openly avowed, they are "baptized into His death," they profess, and that truly, that this union involves a participation in all the blessed results of His death, and, in particular, implies that just as His death altered His own position in relation to sin, the penalty of which He had now once for all borne for man, and which was never again to oppress His spirit, so they also, embracing Him, are rescued both from the condemnation, and from the inward power, of sin. They cannot, there-

into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the

f Rom. viii. 11; 1 Cor. vi. 14; 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

fore, yield themselves to sin, without violating their most solemn professions, and renouncing their most cherished relation,—even that which unites them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 4. *Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead &c.* In this verse the Apostle further develops the sentiment on which he had just dwelt, and leads us to contemplate the participation of true believers in the resurrection-life of the Redeemer, as necessarily resulting from their participation in His death. He gives prominence, we conceive, in the first clause, to one thought implied in his former statement,—the *open avowal*, on the part of Christians, of their union with their Lord in His death, so that their position towards sin is altered by it. He speaks of our being "*buried with Christ by baptism into death.*" Many contend that these words contain an allusion to the *mode* of baptism, and that the submersion of the baptized person, and his reappearance from the water, are indicated by the figures of burial and rising again. Such a reference, however, is, to say the least, very doubtful; and the view which we have suggested seems more in accordance with the Apostle's general course of thought. As the burial of the Saviour was the public proof, the open declaration to all men, of the reality of His death, so baptism in the name of Jesus is, in the case of all adults who believe in Him, the open profession that they share with Him in His death. But this participation in His death must lead, the Apostle argues, to a participation in that new life which He, as the risen Saviour,

dead by ^sthe glory of the Father, ^aeven so we also should walk in newness of life.

5. 'For if we have been planted together in the

g John ii. 11; xi. 40. *h* Gal. vi. 15; Ephes. iv. 22, 23, 24;
Col. iii. 10. *i* Phil. iii. 10, 11.

communicates to all who are united to Him. The subjection of our Lord to the power of death was only temporary. "It was not possible that He should be holden of it." All the glorious perfections of the Father required, that the Representative of men, having offered a complete atonement, and fully upheld and vindicated the principles of the Divine government, should rise again, and enter upon a new and exalted life. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead was an impressive display of "*the Father's glory*," while it attested His own loftiest claims, and showed that the way was open to the justification of all who should receive Him. Nor is it justification only which is provided for us by the crucified and risen One: from Him a *new life* flows forth to all His people,—a life which assimilates them to His character, while it forms the earnest of their eternal union with Him above. And all who claim to be His are bound by the most solemn obligations to "walk in newness of life,"—to develop, in the whole of their deportment and conduct, that hidden life which only His Spirit can impart, and which marks them as separate from the world.

Verse 5. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.* This is an express affirmation of the truth that a participation with Christ in His death necessarily leads to a participation with Him in His resurrection. Several eminent expositors, as Bengel, Olshausen, and Alford,

likeness of His death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *His* resurrection :

6. Knowing this, that *our old man* is crucified

to Gal. ii. 20 ; v. 24 ; vi. 14 ; Ephes. iv. 22 ; Col. iii. 5, 9.

regard the word which we translate "planted together" as properly meaning, "grown together," "intimately united." The ideas intended are doubtless those of *intimate union and assimilation*. Believers are brought into such a relation to Christ, that His death becomes, in an important sense, theirs. They, indeed, surrender their "old man"—their corrupt nature—to be destroyed, and that with dishonour and ignominy ; but it is in virtue of their *relation to Christ* that they rejoice in freedom from condemnation and from the oppressive dominion of sin. And being thus united to Christ, as it were, in His death, they are assured that they shall participate in the triumph of His resurrection. Even here their souls glow with that new life which His Spirit imparts ; and the time will come when their whole nature shall share the fulness of His resurrection-life, and reflect the loveliness of His perfect image.

Verse 6. *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, &c.* In this verse the Apostle enlarges on the believer's participation in Christ's death, and the result to which it tends. He affirms that "our old man is crucified with Him." Thus he marks the thoughtful and deliberate giving up of sin which must accompany a believing reception of the Lord Jesus. We cannot embrace the Saviour, so as to have a personal and saving interest in His death, unless we renounce sin as base and shameful, and seek to have our unholy passions subdued and destroyed. Just as the

with *Him*, that 'the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7. For *he* that is dead is *freed* from sin.

l Col. ii. 11.

m 1 Peter iv. 1.

* Gr. *justified*.

Saviour voluntarily yielded up Himself to the death of the cross, that He might expiate our guilt, and rescue us from the curse of the law; so we, if we would be united to Him in His death, so as to share in all its blessed results, (verses 5, 11,) must surrender "our old man" to crucifixion.—And the result of this crucifixion with Christ is, that the *power* of sin, which before swayed our nature, and governed our whole body, is *broken*; and our unholy tendencies themselves may even be done away. This the Apostle beautifully intimates; and he affirms, also, that from the time when we embrace the Saviour, renouncing and mortifying our sinful passions, and participating, through faith, in the benefits of His death, we are no longer *enslaved* by sin. It may assail and allure us; we may have to mourn over the weakness of our gracious principles, and over tendencies to evil of which we may still be conscious; but we are not subjected to the dominion of sin, and we may even go on to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We have entered upon the path of life, and of holy liberty and power.

Verse 7. *For he that is dead is freed from sin.* This verse affirms a general principle, which the Apostle proceeds to apply to the case of believers as united to Christ, and thus, in effect, dying with Him. The *marginal* rendering of *δεδικαιωται*, "*is justified*," or "*has been justified*," is the only admissible one; and the attempt to make the argument clearer by substituting "*is freed*" only serves to obscure

8. Now *if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him :

n 2 Tim. ii. 11.

and perplex it. A very different word is used in verses 18, 22, where the Apostle speaks of our being "made free from sin." It has been properly remarked, by a writer in the *Biblical Review*, vol. v., that "the technical phraseology of this verse, the use of the phrase *δεδικαιῶται ἀπὸ τῆς ἀμαρτίας*, compels us to understand *ἀποθάνων* of a *legal death*, a death which meets the claims of justice ; which, so far as law is concerned, may be said to absolve the offender from his sin ;" and he adds, "Now the believer can only be said thus to have died, in so far as, by faith, he has become identified with his Substitute, Christ, and consequently, by baptism, the outward expression of his faith, has become a recognised participator of the death of Christ." Thus it is that we are introduced to a position in which we can be sanctified to God, and our energies, instead of being enslaved by sin, may be actively devoted to His service. It is upon our release from a state of condemnation, through our dying with Christ, that the new inward life which prompts to obedience, and renders that obedience delightful, is diffused through our souls.

Verse 8. *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.* Here the Apostle again points out the necessary result, according to the Divine scheme of grace, of our union with Christ in His death. It leads to a union with Him in His resurrection-life, with its boundless and everlasting glories. For just as His death formed a perfect atonement for the sins of men, so that, when He rose again, no penal suffering remained to be undergone by Him as the Mediator, but "the path

9. Knowing that ^oChrist being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.

10. For in that He died, ^pHe died unto sin once:

^o Rev. i. 18.

^p Heb. ix. 27, 28.

of life" stretched before Him into countless ages; so we, embracing Him by faith, are not only "justified from sin," but enter upon a new life with Him, which is designed to endure for ever. That life is one derived from Himself, our risen Lord and Head; and, while it develops its power in our active obedience to God in the present state, it is to be realised in its fulness amidst the glories of that world where He now lives and reigns. On these thoughts the Apostle proceeds to enlarge with holy interest and exultation.

Verse 9. *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.* Here St. Paul dwells on the truth, that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the commencement of a state of exaltation which should never be interrupted. When He came forth from the tomb, His humiliation was at an end. No longer was He subject to death as the Representative of our sinful race. No burden now oppressed His spirit; no painful anticipation troubled His mind. The "cup" of trembling and horror had been drunk; the "baptism" of blood had been undergone; and now, having "overcome the sharpness of death," He "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

Verse 10. *For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.* Still the Apostle lingers, with devout interest, on the truths, that the death

but in that He liveth, 'He liveth unto God.

11. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be

q Luke xx. 38.

of the Lord Jesus completed His penal suffering as the Substitute of our guilty race, and that His resurrection, consequently, was His entrance upon a life that should know no humiliation or sorrow. The statement which he makes respecting the Redeemer, that "the death which He died, He died unto sin once," or "once for all," well merits our attention. Though the phrase "unto sin," or "in relation to sin," is in one sense indefinite, it is yet most significant and comprehensive. St. Paul had already shown, in preceding passages of this Epistle, the light in which he regarded the death of the Lord Jesus. He had spoken of it as a propitiatory offering for the sins of men, appointed by the Eternal Father; (iii. 25 ;) as a death endured "on account of our offences;" (iv. 25 ;) and as one in which the Redeemer took our place, and suffered in our stead (v. 6—8). These views were doubtless present to his mind when he wrote the words before us; but these words give prominence to another thought,—that when the Redeemer died, He effected a *complete atonement*, so that His *relation to sin*, to the penalty of which He had, for our sakes, subjected Himself, *was now severed*. He had done with sin. No more were the iniquities of men to rest, as a heavy burden, upon His spirit, or to subject Him to penal suffering. When He rose from the dead, He rose the victorious Mediator, to whom "the path of life" was opened by the Eternal Father, who was to be enthroned at the Father's right hand, and in whose whole administration the Father's glory was to be displayed.

Verse 11. *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead*

'dead indeed unto sin, but 'alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

12. 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal

r Ver. 2.

s Gal. ii. 19.

t Ps. xix. 13; cxix. 133.

indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. In these words St. Paul completes his statement of the believer's union with Christ in His death and resurrection, and charges Christian professors ever to preserve a deep conviction of this truth, and habitually to realise it. The literal rendering of the last phrase is, "*in Jesus Christ our Lord.*" That phrase properly signifies "in virtue of your union with Jesus Christ our Lord;" and it should be referred to both the particulars which the Apostle specifies,—the believer's death to sin, and his new life unto God. United to Christ by a self-renouncing faith, we gain a saving interest in His death; and thus, as *His* former relation to sin was severed by His death, so *our* former relation to sin is severed by it,—we are released from its condemning sentence, and rescued from its inward power. And just as He entered upon a new and glorious life as the Mediator, as the result of His having offered a complete and perfect atonement, even so we, receiving Him, and being rescued by His death from the sentence of the violated law, become the subjects of a new life, which attracts us even now to God, causes us to delight in obedience to His precepts, and, surviving the stroke of mortality, will for ever develop itself in the realms of light.

Verse 12. *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.* This and the following verse contain the *exhortations* which St. Paul founds upon the great truths that he had just unfolded.

body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

13. Neither yield ye your *members *as* *instru-

* Rom. vii. 5; Col. iii. 5; James iv. 1.

* Gr. *arms, or weapons.*

His loftiest representations of Christian privilege were always designed to be subservient to practical results. In the present case, he had dwelt on the believer's relation to Christ in His death and resurrection, as involving a freedom, and life, and power, which might well be expected to manifest themselves in a course of spiritual obedience; and now he charges believers to maintain such a course. First of all, he calls upon them never to give place to sin, but to resist and conquer it. This is the lesson conveyed in the present verse. His language implies our continued exposure, while in the present state, to temptation. Our "body" is still frail and "*mortal.*" It has not yet attained that undecaying life and perfect excellence for which we hope, as those who even now "live with Christ," and whom He designs to share, at last, His perfect triumph: but it still bears the marks of our fallen state, and is still subject to death as a result of sin. (viii. 10.) And through this, our frail and mortal body, sin often assails us. Sometimes it would incite us to seek the gratification of our appetites, without respect to the limits which the Divine law has prescribed. Sometimes, when the body languishes in depressing exhaustion or severe pain, it would prompt us to feelings opposed to submission to God and filial trust in Him. There are other modes, indeed, in which sin may assail us. Not only does it ally itself to our physical appetites and sensations, but it often assumes more subtle and spiritual forms. Unless we watch unto prayer, a secret pride may insinuate itself into our minds, causing us

ments of unrighteousness unto sin: but ^xyield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead,

x Rom. xii. 1; 1 Peter ii. 24; iv. 2.

to lift up ourselves against God; and a refined selfishness may gradually steal over our spirits, vitiating even those actions which are outwardly fair and good. But we need never give place to sin, or be overcome by it. Sin is "not to *reign* in our mortal body, that we should *obey* it in the lusts thereof." In every season of temptation and conflict, we may triumph through the grace of Him in whose death and resurrection we have a saving interest. Power over sin, both in its inward movements and its outward solicitations, is a leading characteristic of the state to which we have been raised; and if we "abide" in Christ, so as to maintain our spiritual life in its freshness and vigour, we shall not fall a prey to the assaults of evil.

Verse 13. *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, &c.* In the first clause of this verse St. Paul still presses on believers the utter renunciation of sin, and a persistent refusal to yield to its solicitations. But he varies the *aspect* under which he presents this duty. Regarding sin generally, he had been calling upon believers not to allow it to reign over them, and never to obey its impulses: now he charges them not to surrender their members to be instruments of particular acts of wickedness, so as to furnish their bodies to the service of sin. And then he passes to the *positive* view of a complete surrender to God. Resistance to the assaults of sin is the duty required of us. We are to yield ourselves to God, so as to do His will and serve Him.

and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.

14. For *sin* shall not have dominion over you : for

y Rom. vii. 4, 6 ; viii. 2 ; Gal. v. 18.

bodies as instruments of holy service to Him. That new life which we have received through our union with the Lord Jesus, the Crucified and Risen One, will naturally develop itself in such a course of obedience. Being now "alive from the dead,"—participating, indeed, in our Lord's resurrection-life,—we are to "yield ourselves unto God." Seeking to have that life continually strengthened by fellowship with Christ, we are to evince it in every part of our deportment and conduct ; regulating our appetites so that they may consist with holiness, and serve the nobler purposes of existence ; watching over our conversation that it may adorn the gospel ; and using our body as the instrument of constant and cheerful obedience to the Divine will. The spirit of self-dedication to God is to extend its influence to our whole nature, and to ennoble and sanctify even the ordinary engagements of life.

Verse 14. *For sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* Here the Apostle expresses, in a brief and comprehensive manner, the *general result* to which his preceding reasonings on the believer's position had conducted him. That position, he affirms, is one of *freedom from the dominion of sin*. If a man abides in Christ, sin will seek in vain to re-assert its power, or again to hold him captive. The words in which he sets forth the *ground* of this freedom are weighty and remarkable :—"for ye are not under the law, but under grace." It cannot surely be necessary to argue, at length, that, in

ye are not under the law, but under grace.

the first of these expressions, St. Paul did *not* intend to represent believers as free from the *obligation* of the *moral precepts* of God. Such a sentiment is opposed to the whole course of his reasoning; it is inconsistent with the earnest manner in which, in all his Epistles, he urges particular duties as binding on Christ's people; and it is directly contradicted by his own explicit assertion in 1 Cor. ix. 21. The Apostle's argument in this Epistle, and his use of similar phraseology in other places, point to a very different interpretation. The position of a man who is "under the law," as contrasted with that of one who is "under grace," embraces *two* things:—first, he has nothing but the provisions and requirements of the law to deal with; and secondly, he is held in the law's condemning grasp. The latter idea is distinctly implied in the Apostle's statement in Gal. iv. 5, where he affirms the great purpose of the manifestation of the Son of God in our nature, and as our Substitute, to have been, that He might "redeem *them that were under the law*, that we might receive the adoption of sons." This, then, is the ground of the believer's freedom from the tyranny of sin. Were we, the Apostle argues, still "under the law," held in its condemning grasp, and having nothing beyond its requirements to look to, sin would indeed "have dominion" over us. The sense of hopeless condemnation would depress our souls; and the absence of all direct help from the Holy Spirit would leave us powerless to resist temptat on. But because we are "under grace,"—accepted, as a matter of gift and favour, through the provisions of redemption, and placed under a constitution which secures to us the indwelling of the Spirit as the Source of a new life,—we are rescued from

15. What then ? shall we sin, *because we are not under the law, but under grace ? God forbid.

16. Know ye not, that *to whom ye yield your-

* 1 Cor. ix. 21. α Matt. vi. 24 ; John viii. 34 ; 2 Peter ii. 19.

the power of sin, and may be more than conquerors in the spiritual warfare.

Verse 15. *What then ? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace ? God forbid.* St. Paul now enters upon the second branch of his argument against the antinomian perversion of the doctrine of gratuitous justification. He had fixed attention on the position of the believer in Christ, as "not under the law," in the sense just explained, "but under grace." Now the constitution of mercy, in the blessings of which the believer rejoices, provides even for the repeated cancelling of transgression, and gives hope to every wanderer of restoration to his forfeited privileges. But through the perverseness of the human heart, and the artifices of the powers of darkness, this gracious constitution is liable to be abused. The Apostle, indeed, had exultingly referred to it as showing that the condition of the believer is one of freedom from the dominion of sin : but he well knew, that others might pervert it to a very different result. And he now takes up again the antinomian heresy, and meets it with a direct, and earnest, and indignant protest.

Verse 16. *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, &c.* It is scarcely possible for us not to be impressed with the healthy tone, and the manly earnestness, of this remonstrance. The Apostle appeals to the *conscience* of every man, as immediately showing him that, whatever his profession may be, he is *really* the servant of that

selves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

17. But God be thanked, that ye were the servants

power to which he voluntarily surrenders himself; so that if any one who professes to exult in the mercy of God in Christ, yields himself to practise sin, his religious profession is a delusion and a mockery. Such a man, St. Paul contends, is truly the "servant" of sin, and must receive at last the "wages" of eternal "death;" while the man who yields himself to God, embracing His overtures of grace, and seeking to do His will, shall at length receive "the crown of righteousness" which fadeth not away. It is important to remark, that it is the *voluntary* and *deliberate giving up* of ourselves either to the practice of iniquity, or to the service of God, of which the Apostle here speaks. He does not refer to the man who occasionally gives place to some wrong inward feeling, the consciousness of which almost instantly fills him with regret, and leads him deeply to humble himself before God. Such a man does not yield himself unto sin, to obey it as his chosen lord and master; but deplores its ascendancy, and seeks to be rescued from its power.

Verse 17. *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart &c.* Here St. Paul passes to the experience of the Roman Christians, and reminds them of the great and decisive change which they had undergone. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the form of the sentence must not be pressed so as to imply, that *he thanked God that once* the believers at Rome were subject to the dominion of sin: the idea obviously is, that *whereas* they had been in a state of bondage to iniquity,

of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart ^b that form of doctrine *which was delivered you.

18. Being then 'made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

^b 2 Tim. i. 13. * Gr. *whereto ye were delivered*.

^c John viii. 32; 1 Cor. vii. 22; Gal. v. 1; 1 Peter ii. 16.

they had now obeyed the gospel from the heart, and had experienced its transforming power. This distinct and beautiful reference to the scheme of Christian truth as that which men "obey," when they become the servants of God, sheds a valuable light on the rather singular expression which St. Paul had used in the preceding verse, "whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." The obedience in question is, as we have explained, obedience to God; but it takes the form, *primarily*, of the surrender of ourselves to His scheme of grace, together with a fixed and earnest purpose to keep His precepts.—The marginal rendering of the last expression, "*whereto*," or "*into which*," "*ye were delivered*," represents far more accurately than that of the text the sentiment of the Apostle. The system of Christian doctrine is represented as a mould into which the believing mind is cast, so that all its principles and affections are conformed to it. The character of every man is *moulded anew* when from the heart he embraces the gospel, and, surrendering himself to Christ, humbly claims an interest in His death, and looks for the promised Spirit to sanctify his nature, and to sustain him in the path of obedience.

Verse 18. *Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.* Still the Apostle keeps before the view of the Roman Christians the change which they had

19. I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh : for as ye have yielded your

experienced, varying, however, in the last clause, the mode of expressing it. Throughout this branch of his argument, he represents sin as a haughty tyrant, exercising over all his subjects an imperious sway. This tyrant all who allow themselves in iniquity obey. They follow his injunctions ; they are urged onward by his impulses ; and they will receive at last "the wages" which he gives, even eternal death. But of all true believers he affirms, that they are "made free from sin ;"—they are rescued from the power of this imperious master, and they have entered upon another service. That service he represents as rendered to "*righteousness*," (verses 18, 19, 20,) and to "God" (verse 22). Both modes of expression convey the same great truth. In the former "*righteousness*" is personified, even as "sin" is personified. It is represented as a power to which a man surrenders himself. Perhaps we may most accurately conceive of it as the *moral rectitude* to which, according to the Divine scheme of grace, our acceptance in Christ is to be subservient. Believing in the Lord Jesus, and being accounted righteous in Him, we *come under an obligation* to practise universal righteousness, and to present to the world a character of uniform and sustained holiness.

Verse 19. *I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh : for as ye have yielded &c.* In the first clause of this verse, St. Paul almost apologises for the strong figurative expressions which he had just used, and especially for the phrase, "ye became servants," or, as some would render it, "ye were enslaved," "to righteousness." From the latter idea an earnest mind might recoil ;

members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

and even the former—which seems to be all that his language properly implies—might appear to involve a degree of harshness. But the Apostle says, in explanation, that he avails himself of these figures, and puts this strong antithesis, as men are wont to do, in order the more pointedly to bring out the truth intended, and to assist their apprehension of his meaning. And then he goes on earnestly to exhort the Roman believers to a course of practical obedience to God. In their former state, they had “yielded their members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity.” The first term refers to those sins of impurity to which man’s fallen nature is so prone, and which, as the Apostle had shown in the first chapter, prevailed so extensively in the Gentile world. The second has, strictly, the force of “lawlessness,” or “opposition to law,” and marks a state in which the Divine authority is set aside and renounced, and man seeks the gratification of his own desires without any regard to their being prohibited. Now the result of their yielding themselves to these forms of sin was, that they had actually come into collision with the law, had violated its precepts, and were condemned by its sanctions. But now another career was before them. Rescued from the tyranny of sin, they were called upon to “yield their members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” Welcoming the restraint of that *rectitude* which once they despised and rejected, and rejoicing in the favour of Him who had accepted them in Christ, they were to give themselves up to do His will, and to glorify Him by a holy life and conversation.

20. For when ye were ^dthe servants of sin, ye were free ^efrom righteousness.

21. ^fWhat fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for ^fthe end of those things is death.

d John viii. 34.

* Gr. to righteousness.

e Rom. vii. 5.

f Rom. i. 32.

Verses 20, 21. *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.* The Apostle still employs the figures in which he had set forth the past and the present condition of the Roman Christians. He reminds them that, in their former state, being given up to the dominion of sin, they had nothing to do with righteousness, and were free from its mild and benignant restraints. But what, he asks, was the "*fruit*" of this state,—what *the course of practice* which it induced, and what the *final result* to which it tended? And, in solemn and earnest language, he replies to this inquiry. Their service to sin had led them on to acts of immorality, from the very thought of which they now turned away with shame and sorrow; and "*the end*" of these things—the certain and necessary result of them, if not renounced, and wept over, and forgiven through Christ—was "*death*," the hopeless, everlasting ruin of the soul. We may well linger on this simple, but most emphatic, assertion. If there is one word which, applied to man as a moral agent, expresses the greatest loss and penalty which he can endure, that word is "*death*." It is not simply the loss of physical life:—*that* is but the emblem of something far more terrible. Just as, in relation to earth, death is the greatest penalty, cutting us off from life

22. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

g John viii. 32.

with its activities and hopes, and rendering all future enjoyment impossible; so *death*, in the deep sense in which the Apostle here uses the term, implies our hopeless loss of spiritual life, and consequently of the enjoyment proper to our moral nature;—our hopeless and irrevocable exclusion from the Divine presence, and from all that can give peace to the human spirit. It is “the loss”—the irreparable loss—“of the soul;” it is “to perish,” and be cast off for ever.

Verse 22. *But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.* These words clearly and beautifully represent the state of *all* true believers, and the glorious issue to which their course of service to God is tending; placing them in vivid contrast with their former condition and prospects. Before they came to the Lord Jesus, they were “the servants of sin;” *now* they are “made free from sin,” rescued from its bondage, and no longer enslaved by its desires. *Then* they were “free from righteousness;” they had not come under its mild restraints, and sought not to carry out its requirements. *Now* they are “become servants to God;” they have thoughtfully and deliberately given themselves up to Him, to obey His precepts, to submit to every prohibition of His will, and to direct the whole of life to His glory. The “fruit” which, in their former state, they yielded, was a course of conduct which they could not now look back upon without a bitter sense of moral degradation; and they themselves tasted that fruit

23. For *the wages of sin is death*; but *the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*.

h Gen. ii. 17; Rom. v. 12; James i. 15. i Rom. ii. 7; v. 17, 21;
1 Peter i. 4.

in its tendency to destroy all real happiness, and to fill the soul with restlessness and dismay. But now, having entered upon the service of God in Christ, they "have their fruit unto holiness,"—they are enabled to develop all those principles which are morally pure and lovely, and in the cultivation of which man reflects the excellence of the Divine character. "The end" to which, in their former state, they were rapidly hastening, was "death:" but now "the end" that opens to their view—the great and blessed issue to which all the operations of Divine grace within them, and all their developments of Christian principle, are tending—is "everlasting life," a life enjoyed in the most intimate communion with the Saviour, one in which their restored and perfected nature will find the consummation of its bliss, and one which no outward danger can threaten, and no inward decay can impair.

Verse 23. *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* With this sentiment the Apostle winds up this branch of his argument. He had carried forward our minds to "the end" of our probationary career; and now again he contrasts the *different issues* of a course of sin, and one of obedience to God,—that obedience manifesting itself primarily in the reception of the Christian message, and then in the practical observance of the Divine precepts. "The wages of sin," he affirms, "is death." The final wreck of our nature, the hopeless ruin of the soul, is the *merited result* of a course of wilful transgression; while it forms "the wages" which

the tyrant *sin* pays to all who submit to his cruel service. But he does not add that "everlasting life" is the wages of righteousness. He *could not* use such an expression. His mind was occupied with the *gratuitous* character of the Christian salvation; and he regarded the holy affections which distinguish believers, and the course of service to God which they delight to pursue, as the result of that grace of the Spirit which freely flows to them through Christ, and which, upon their being united to Him by faith, attracts them to God by an inward life, which forms the earnest of their eternal blessedness and glory. "For the wages of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life IN Jesus Christ our Lord."

CHAPTER VII.

1. KNOW ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them

CHAPTER VII.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

IN the further development of the position and state of believers in Christ, St. Paul now dwells on the thought, that, in virtue of their sharing in the Saviour's death, they are *dead to the law*, so as to be released from its condemning grasp; and that, participating in His resurrection-life, and enjoying an intimate union with Him, they are enabled to offer to God spiritual obedience.

He next enters upon the consideration of *the character of the law*, and its *bearing* upon man's condition and prospects, partly with the view of guarding one of the strong expressions which he had used against perversion. Repelling, with holy indignation, the suggestion, that the law is chargeable with the sins of men, he contends that it is, in itself, "holy, and just, and good." But he goes on to show that the law *manifests* sin, declaring its opposition to the Divine will; and he argues that, in the present fallen state of our nature, sin is *called forth* into active development by the very consciousness of restraint, and assumes more offensive and revolting forms through our resistance to the authority that claims to regulate our desires, and to govern our lives.

Thus the Apostle was led to dwell on the *insufficiency* of the law to meet the case of man. To evince this in the most striking manner, he traces the *conflict* that passes in the mind, when the delusions by which sinful passion led

that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth ?

it astray have been dispelled, and when the judgment and conscience are brought to approve of the law, and even to admire its excellence, but when the sinful tendencies of our nature have not been subdued and corrected by the life-giving energy of the Holy Ghost. He shows us that "sin dwelling in us" triumphs over the most decided convictions of the judgment, and the most vivid apprehensions of the beauty of moral rectitude, until, at length, wearied and ready to faint with the hopeless struggle, we cast ourselves in conscious helplessness before God, and then the scheme of grace and life in Christ opens itself to our view, assuring us, upon our coming to Him, of a power which shall rescue us from our captivity, and enable us to enter upon a course of spiritual service to God.

Verse 1. *Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion &c.* The course of thought which the Apostle thus introduces, appears to have been suggested by his statement in vi. 14: "For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." In order more fully to unfold the truth thus indicated, he now explains how the Christian is released from the grasp of the law, and how, while a method of justification, distinct from that of perfect obedience to it, has been opened to him, provision has been made for his engaging in a course of spiritual service to God, and actually glorifying Him by a holy walk and conversation. Some *general* questions, affecting this section of St. Paul's argument, (verses 1—6,) may here be properly adverted to. First of all, there appears to be no sufficient

2. For "the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he

a 1 Cor. vii. 39.

ground for the idea which some have advanced, that when he says, "for I speak to them that know the law," he refers to the *Jewish* Christians, as distinguished from the Gentile believers; and that, consequently, this part of his argument relates to them *exclusively*. The very form of the words in the original is opposed to such an exposition, and implies, rather, on the part of the Roman Christians generally, a knowledge of the law in its leading requirements and general principles. Such an acquaintance with it St. Paul had already, in several parts of this Epistle, assumed them to possess.—In the next place, it is contrary to the general tenor of the Apostle's remarks, to understand this section of *the abrogation of the Mosaic law*, as distinguished from the great moral precepts of God which belong to every dispensation of religion. For when he comes to apply the general principle which he affirms in this verse, and which he illustrates by a familiar example in verses 2, 3, to the case which he has in view, he does *not* affirm that *the law is dead*, or that it has ceased to hold *any man whatever*, but he affirms, on the contrary, that *certain persons*, in virtue of their interest in Christ's sacrificial death, *are dead in relation to it*. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to Another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Verse 4.) Nor is this all. For when he proceeds, in verses 7—12, to guard against an erroneous view of the character and bearing of the law, which one of his strong expressions in verse 5 might seem to sanction, he clearly shows us that the law of which he

liveth ; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband.

had been speaking comprehends the fundamental moral precepts which were announced in the Decalogue. The one example which he adduces, in illustration of his position, that the law does *not produce* sin, but *manifests* it, is taken from the tenth commandment delivered on Sinai, the permanent validity of which is unquestionable. A far deeper truth, then, than the abrogation of the law of ceremonies is taught in this passage ; and that truth will become clear to us, as we ponder the Apostle's words, and seek to enter into his modes of thought.—With respect to the last clause of the verse before us, it has been made a question whether it should be translated, “as long as *he* liveth,” or “as long as *it* liveth.” But the former rendering—that of our Authorised Version—is the more simple and natural, and harmonises far better with the context. For the illustration of the principle which immediately follows shows us, that the Apostle had in view *life* and *death* on the part of *men*, as affecting their position towards the law ; and, as we have seen, when he comes to the application of the principle, he does not speak of the law as dying, but of *our* dying, if we are believers, in relation to it. (See notes on verses 4, 6.)—Further, it is important, in order to a full apprehension of the Apostle's meaning, to observe the peculiar force of the verb which he employs,—“the law *hath dominion over* a man.” It places before us the law as a power which *rules* a man, and which *holds* him in its condemning grasp if he transgresses its requirements. And St. Paul's position is, that this ruling power of the law continues, until death takes place, dissolving our former relations, and introducing us to an entirely new state.

Verses 2, 3. *For the woman which hath an husband is*

3. So then ^bif, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

4. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become

^b Matt. v. 32.

bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; &c. These verses furnish a familiar and obvious illustration of the general principle which the Apostle had just laid down. The law of marriage, as every one conversant with it would admit, binds a woman to her husband during the period of his life; but death dissolves that bond, and cancels its obligations. It was not necessary for St. Paul to put the case *vice versâ*, so as to show that the death of either party dissolves the relation. The principle was sufficiently established by this one clear and unquestionable case; and the Apostle hastens to apply it to the position of the man who has, in effect, died with Christ.

Verse 4. *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to Another, &c.* This verse contains the deepest truth, and presents to us those conceptions of the believer's relation to Christ on which the Apostle Paul delighted to dwell. There is a striking resemblance between it and a passage in the Epistle to the Galatians: "For I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then

‘dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to Another, *even* to Him who is raised

c Rom. viii. 2; Gal. ii. 19; v. 18; Ephes. ii. 15; Col. ii. 14.

Christ is dead in vain.” (ii. 19—21.) It has been properly remarked, that the word which we render “are become dead” is one which expresses a death brought about *by violence*, and thus resembles the expression, “*I am crucified with Christ.*” Both phrases have been selected to mark more strongly *the believer’s participation in Christ’s death, as that which alters his position towards the law, and frees him from its condemning grasp.* For there can be no question, surely, that the clause, “by the body of Christ,” refers to our blessed Lord as *submitting to death for us*, and, to use the remarkable language of St. Peter, “bearing our sins in His own body on the tree.” It is, then, through the death of Jesus, when appropriated by a living faith, that we die to the law. Before we receive Christ, so as to have a personal and saving interest in His atonement, “the law *has dominion over*” us,—we are “*held*” by its power, and exposed to the penalty which the transgression of it involves. But when, in penitence and faith, we come to the Lord Jesus who, as our Representative and Substitute, died a penal death, and thus met the claims of the law, our position towards it is changed. We die, as it were, with Him; His death *virtually* becomes ours, according to *the mediatorial constitution* which God has established; and *thus* the hold of the law upon us is relaxed, and we pass from under its condemning power. But this death with Christ is immediately followed by our attaining a new life with Him; and now, being brought into the most intimate and endearing relation to Him, as our Risen Lord, we are enabled, through His gracious

from the dead, that we should ^dbring forth fruit unto God.

d Gal. v. 22.

power, to bring forth the "fruit" of holy service, and to glorify God by a life of devotion, and purity, and benevolence. We are "married to Another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." It is most instructive to observe how, both in this passage and in that cited from the Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul connects *these two views* of the believer's position and character,—His death to the law, through his participation in the Saviour's death, and his enjoyment of a new life with his Lord, who, having met the claims of the law by enduring the penal suffering which the principles of the Divine government required, has risen from the dead, no more to suffer or to die. In the *union* of these two truths we have a safeguard against the antinomian abuse of the former of them. Should any one pervert that truth, so as to palliate his sins, and encourage himself in a course of licentious indulgence, by affirming that, upon his believing in the Lord Jesus, he has nothing more to do with the law, the answer is, that such an one knows nothing of that death with Christ through which only we die to the law. For if he did,—if he had so received the Lord Jesus by penitent faith as to have the merit of His death imputed to him, and the law had consequently relaxed its hold of condemnation upon him,—then would he exult also in the possession of a new life, and in that intimate and endearing union with his risen Lord which produces spiritual obedience.—There is, also, another ground on which such a perversion of the Apostle's teaching may be repelled. St. Paul nowhere affirms, that the believer has nothing more to do with the law, or that he is released from it as

5. For when we were in the flesh, the *motions

* Gr. *passions*.

the rule which he is to strive, under the impulses of the new life imparted to him, habitually to observe. He does affirm that, in virtue of our sharing in Christ's death, we are released from the "hold" of the law. It is no longer *the ruling power which holds us under its dominion, and subjects us to condemnation*. But the law itself remains,—the authoritative expression of the will of God, and the rule of His people's duty. *Fidelity to the Lord Jesus* binds us to carry out its principles; while the new life which His Spirit imparts enables us to observe its requirements with cheerfulness and delight. See verse 6, and viii. 3, 4.

Verse 5. *For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, &c.* In this and the following verse, St. Paul contrasts the state of subjection to sin and exposure to death which preceded our reception of Christ, with the state of holy liberty and power to which, upon believing in Him, we have been introduced. Here, for the first time in this Epistle, he uses the expression "the flesh" in that peculiar sense which is familiar to every thoughtful reader of the New Testament;—a sense in which it repeatedly occurs in the remainder of this chapter and the former part of the following one. It is needless to prove, at length, that "to be in the flesh" does not mean "to be in the body;" for this, indeed, is self-evident. Throughout this section of the Epistle, "to be in the flesh" is opposed to being "in the Spirit;" and the Apostle, addressing the Roman believers, says expressly, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (viii. 9.) The expression, then, clearly relates to *our natural state*,—our state before we receive Christ, and,

of sins, which were by the law, 'did work in our members ^fto bring forth fruit unto death.

e Rom. vi. 13. f Rom. vi. 21; Gal. v. 19; James i. 15.

dying, as it were, with Him, attain also to a new life with Him, though the communication of His Spirit. The want of the life-giving energy of the Holy Ghost leaves our nature corrupt and unholy. If the Spirit dwells not in our hearts, we are destitute of that mysterious power which attracts every devout mind to God, causes it to glow with heavenly sympathies, and qualifies it for obedience to the Divine will. Thus our affections are necessarily disordered, and various evils, according to our peculiar temperament, gain the mastery over us. Now the Apostle affirms the grand characteristic of our state, when "in the flesh," to have been, that *sin triumphed in us*, manifesting its power in *our outward deportment and conduct*, and exposing us to "death," as its natural and threatened result. Several of the terms which he uses, in stating this truth, demand our careful regard. He speaks of "the *motions* of sins," or, according to the more literal rendering in the margin, "the *passions* of sins," "*working* in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." Thus he, in effect, affirms, that the unholy tendencies of our nature, roused so as to become strong and eager passions, impelled us to pursue a course of transgression which could only result in our endless separation from God, and the hopeless ruin of our souls. And he introduces another element into his description of our natural state. He uses the remarkable phrase "the passions of sins, *which were by the law*," thus intimating that, while we continue unregenerate, not only is the law unable to subdue our evil tendencies, but it very often calls them forth in greater virulence. Excellent and holy in

6. But now we are delivered from the law, ||that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve *in* newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

|| Or, *being dead to that*. Verse 4; Rom. vi. 2. *g* Rom. ii. 29;
2 Cor. iii. 6.

itself, the law rouses into activity our dislike of restraint, irritates the desires which it claims to repress, and thus gives to our transgressions a character of presumptuous boldness. The very fact that a thing is prohibited often prompts the heart that is depraved and selfish,—the heart that has no delight in God, no sympathy with the moral order of the universe,—to desire it intensely, and to resolve on obtaining it. A depraved imagination invests the forbidden object with delusive attractions, until, being allured onward to grasp it, we prove how vain and unsatisfying are its charms, and how terrible the ruin to which it has exposed us.

Verse 6. *But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve &c.* The marginal reading, "*being dead to that wherein we were held,*" is now *universally* admitted to be the correct one. There is no authority worthy of mention for that given in the text, which, indeed, would only introduce confusion into the Apostle's argument. The truth which he here insists upon is, that, upon our embracing Christ by faith, we die to the law, so as to be released from its condemning grasp. The law itself is not cancelled or annulled; but it relaxes its hold upon us, and no longer binds us to suffer its penalty. But this very "deliverance" from the law, as the power that "held" us, is in order to our entering upon a course of "*service*" to God, which shall be prompted

7. What shall we say then? *Is the law sin? God forbid.* Nay, *I had not known sin, but by the law:*

h. Rom. iii. 20.

by a new inward life diffused through our souls by the Spirit of Christ. Our vain and feeble attempts at *outward service*, while we were still unregenerate,—attempts sincerely put forth in our better moments, when the delusions of sinful passion were dispelled,—now give place to a course of *spiritual obedience*. So far from considering ourselves released from the obligation to obey the Divine precepts, we cherish a deep conviction that we are still to “*serve*” God; but, rejoicing in the freedom from condemnation which comes to us through Christ, and gratefully acknowledging that another ground of acceptance than that of perfect obedience to the law has been established,—even the sacrificial death of Jesus, in which through faith we have a personal interest,—we serve “in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

Verse 7. *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: &c.* Here we enter upon a new section of the Apostle’s argument, suggested by the strong expression which he had just used, “the motions of sins, *which were by the law.*” This expression some might pervert so as to imply, that the law itself is chargeable with the sins of men,—that the *blame* of our transgressions may be justly attributed to the Divine requirements, calling into active operation our dislike of restraint, and thus inflaming the passions which they reprove and denounce. From such a sentiment the Apostle indignantly recoils; and he proceeds to point out, more clearly and fully, the action of the law in the case of unregenerate men, and to maintain its intrinsic goodness

for I had not known || lust, except the law had said,
 'Thou shalt not covet.

8. But ^ksin, taking occasion by the commandment,

|| Or, *concupiscence*. i Exod. xx. 17; Deut. v. 21; Acts xx. 33;
 Rom. xiii. 9. k Rom. iv. 15; v. 20.

and excellence. The *first* thing on which he dwells is, that the law *manifests* sin, showing what is, and what is not, contrary to rectitude, and offensive to the Divine purity, and, by the light which it sheds on the affections and conduct of men, revealing *the principle of sin*, which, alas! is seated in our nature, and which is ever ready to develop itself in act. And he adduces one example of this action of the law. Sinful desire, he argues, might again and again have risen in the heart, and have been cherished there, without the mind being fully aware of its true character, if the law, as delivered on Sinai, had not said, "Thou shalt not covet." That commandment pours a searching light on the impulses of depraved feeling, arousing the conscience, and causing the man who might have deemed himself virtuous, to feel that he is sinful before God.

Verse 8. *But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.* That action of the law on which St. Paul had just dwelt is its *immediate* and *direct* action: it reveals the workings of the principle of sin within us, and shows us that particular feelings and deeds are opposed to the Divine will. But there is an *incidental* effect of the application of the law to the mind, to which he now adverts. The precepts of God, holy and excellent as they are, may become the *occasion* of calling forth our sinful tendencies into fiercer activity. But the *motive power*, the Apostle contends, is *sin within us*: the

wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For 'without the law sin *was* dead.

9. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

1 1 Cor. xv. 56.

commandment only affords *that* on which sinful passion fastens, and its resentment against which inflames it yet more intensely. The "commandment" to which he specially alludes in this verse, is that which he had just cited,—the commandment which forbids all irregular desire. Many passages might be adduced from ancient heathen writers, in illustration of the sentiment which the Apostle's argument implies, that the very fact that a thing is forbidden often calls forth a more eager desire for its possession. But we have only to trace the workings of our own hearts, before they are renewed by Divine grace, to be satisfied of the truth of this statement.

For without the law sin was dead. In this clause, as in the preceding part of the verse, the term "sin" refers to the principle of sin within us. The Apostle clearly recognises in man the operation of inward depravity, and, in particular, of a principle which resents any interference with our gratifications or our cherished hopes. And the position which he here assumes is, that "without the law," before it is apprehended, and before, consequently, its prohibitions come into collision with our desires, sin *lies as dead*,—it is, *comparatively*, feeble and inoperative, it does not exert its power as it afterwards does, when roused into activity by the consciousness of restraint. Then it rises up in proud defiance of authority, and places man in open antagonism to the government of Jehovah.

Verse 9. *For I was alive without the law once: but when,*

10. And the commandment, "which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

m Lev. xviii. 5; Ezek. xx. 11, 13, 21; 2 Cor. iii. 7.

the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Considerable diversity of opinion exists among thoughtful expositors, as to the import and application of this verse. We may at once dismiss the view of those who contend that the Apostle here speaks in the person of the Jewish nation, and that he refers to the period between the call of Abraham and the giving of the law. He is evidently tracing a process which goes on in an individual mind, and pointing out the change in its state and prospects, when the commandment "comes" to it, calling forth the principle of sin into activity, and leaving it consciously exposed to eternal ruin. The words "without the law," *χωρίς νόμου*, seem to imply a state in which the law is unknown,—in which there is no apprehension of its requirements, and no consciousness of subjection to its authority. In such a state an individual may, in a *modified* sense, be said to be "alive:"—there is a feeling of quiet and security, partially resembling the true repose of the soul that is really safe in Christ. Or if, with Olshausen and some others, we regard the Apostle as specially referring to the case of undeveloped infancy, the statement may be understood of that title to eternal life which all whose earthly course closes in infancy, and before moral responsibility commences, really have in virtue of their sharing in the benefits of Christ's redeeming work. But when "the commandment comes" to us, with its restraining power, it not only discloses the sin that is within us, but rouses it to activity and vigour, and thus subjects us, and that *consciously*, to eternal ruin.

Verse 10. *And the commandment, which was ordained*

11. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

to life, I found to be unto death. Here the Apostle places in striking contrast the *primary object* of the commandment, and its *actual effect* in the case of man, considered as fallen and corrupt. The commandment was "*unto life*;" it was designed not only to guard the rights of Jehovah as to us His creatures and subjects, and our rights as to each other, but also to guide us in the path of purity and rectitude, so that we might possess "*life*" in the highest and best sense. But this very commandment "*is found*," in the actual experience of men, to be "*unto death*." The law, excellent and holy in itself, possesses no power to mould the human heart to rectitude, or to conquer the principle of sin within, which resents control, and seeks gratification without limit. Nay, more: it calls forth this resistance to restraint, and leaves man exposed to the fearful consequences of sin, in all their terrible weight.

Verse 11. *For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.* In these words the Apostle still further develops the sentiment which he had just expressed; and his phraseology, while it is carefully guarded, is remarkably vivid and graphic. He shows us that, although it is the law which subjects us, upon our transgressing it, to condemnation, yet it is the principle of sin, called into activity by the restraints of the Divine precepts, which is really *the cause* of our ruin. It is *this* which, by the law, "*slays*" us. And he adverts to the *deception* which our sinful tendencies often practise upon us. The gratifications which are forbidden are supposed, though most falsely, to be conducive to happiness. They are invested, by our irregular desires, with fictitious charms; and the law which prohibits them is deemed to be harsh

12. Wherefore *the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

n Ps. xix. 8; cxix. 38, 137; 1 Tim. i. 8.

and cruel. In vain—if the grace of the Spirit of Christ moves not powerfully on the heart—is the moral beauty of holiness set forth; there is that within us which covets the forbidden thing, and which deceives us by clothing it, very much *because it is* forbidden, with false attractions. But when sin has done its work, and we have broken through the restraints of the Divine law, then we discover how fallacious were the expectations which it held out, how worthless were the objects which allured us, and how fearful is the *ruin* into which it has plunged us, and the *death* that is before us.

Verse 12. *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.* This is one conclusion which St. Paul sought to establish in this branch of his general argument. He had introduced the section with the inquiry, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin?" Such a sentiment he had at once indignantly repudiated; and now, having traced out the action of the law on the minds of unregenerate men, and shown its relation to their state of condemnation and ruin, he affirms most strongly its *intrinsic excellence*. "The law," he declares, "is holy; and the commandment"—every particular precept of that law, however it may come into collision with the desires of men—"is holy, and just, and good." It is "*holy*;"—it sets forth the moral rectitude which should command the homage and love of every mind, and of which, in its fundamental principles, God Himself is the great Exemplar. It is "*just*;"—it is founded on the relations in which we stand to God and to each other, and, while asserting the

13. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that

claims of Jehovah to our supreme devotion and unreserved obedience, it throws its shield over the most sacred rights and dearest interests of mankind. All its prohibitions, while they restrain *us*, are designed, by restraining *others* too, to guard us from injury and wrong, and to secure to us the undisputed possession of that to which we are entitled. And it is "*good*;"—for when its precepts are complied with, there is induced a placid and firm state of mind, the very serenity and moral dignity for which our nature has been formed. Nay, more: if these precepts were universally observed, the chief source of human suffering would be banished from this earth. For who can estimate the deep and awful misery which guilty passion, breaking through all restraint, is everywhere diffusing? It is sin which darkens and pollutes our world; and if, through the abounding grace of Christ, the reign of law were established in every human heart, this earth would be relieved of its bitterest sorrows, and those which remained would be alleviated by the heavenly peace and hope which fill the devout mind.

Verse 13. *Was then that which was good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, &c.* Here the Apostle, winding up this part of his argument, and being about to pass on to another topic, though one intimately related to this, again affirms, in clear and emphatic language, the position which he had all along maintained, and which he had, more particularly, set forth in verse 11. It is not *the law*, he contends, which is the *cause of death*; for this, in itself, is good and excellent.

sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

But it is *sin*, revealed in its true character by the law,—called into yet fiercer activity by its restraints,—and acquiring a yet *deeper malignity*, as being presumptuously committed against the known will of Him who has brought us into being, whose hand, though unseen, continually sustains us, and who sits enthroned over all created beings.

Verse 14. *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.* Few passages in the writings of St. Paul have given rise to greater diversity of opinion, than that which extends from this verse to the end of the chapter. The question has been strenuously debated, whether the Apostle here describes his own experience, or places himself in the position of others who are painfully conscious of a severe struggle between their convictions of duty and the promptings of sinful desire, and in whom, alas! sinful passion too often triumphs. And among those who have adopted the latter view, the question has arisen, whether the experience indicated is that of a regenerate man, who is still weak in faith and in the other graces of the Christian character, or that of a man who is not yet in Christ, and has never attained the spiritual life and power which He imparts to every believer. But though the passage is, in some points, confessedly obscure, it will not be difficult, we think, to arrive at satisfactory conclusions on the questions now referred to.

It would be folly to contend, that the Apostle makes *no* allusion here to anything that had *ever* passed in his own breast. Doubtless he had a vivid consciousness of former struggles; and the remembrance of these, as it had contributed to mould his representations in the preceding

14. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I

verses, served also to give a peculiar form to the graphic description of a protracted inward conflict which he here draws. But to imagine that he is here describing *his own state when he wrote this Epistle*,—that, in using the term “I,” he really means himself as *he then was*,—is to violate all consistency. Such an exposition is shut out by what he says in viii. 2: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Besides, can the supposition be entertained for a moment, that St. Paul, when he wrote this Epistle, could truly speak of himself as “sold under sin,”—a helpless captive under the bondage of unholy tendencies? Surely he who, while acknowledging his utter weakness, could yet gratefully declare, “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me,” could not represent himself as utterly powerless to conquer sinful desire, and to practise that holiness which commended itself to his mind as excellent and lovely! The excellent and pious Dr. Doddridge properly remarks on this point:—“To suppose that the Apostle speaks all these things of himself, as the confirmed Christian that he really was when he wrote this Epistle, is not only foreign, but contrary, to the whole scope of his discourse.”

With equal confidence may we put aside the idea, that the Apostle here delineates the experience of a *regenerate man*, but one *not yet confirmed in holiness*. For this would be in direct opposition to the view which he gives of the position and state of *all* who are in Christ Jesus, both in the chapter preceding this, and in that which immediately follows. In refuting the antinomian perversion of the doctrine of grace, he had shown at length, that believers are rescued from the tyranny of sin, and have entered,

am carnal, 'sold under sin.

o 1 Kings xxi. 20, 25 ; 2 Kings xvii. 17.

under the influence of new principles and affections, upon the service of God. Contrasting their former state of subjection to sin and exposure to death with their present state of actual salvation through Christ, he had said, "But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." (vi. 22.) In the commencement of the eighth chapter, which stands in a most intimate connection with the present one, he describes a state of spiritual freedom as the immediate result of our union with Christ, and our consequent reception of the life-giving Spirit. The conflict between the two "laws,"—the two powers that claimed to rule the man,—the law of an enlightened judgment, and the law of sinful passion associating itself with the appetites of the body, had terminated in the victory of the latter, and man remained a captive under the dominion of evil; (vii. 23;) but now the Apostle brings another "law"—another power that claims to rule—upon the scene, even "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," and that power liberates the prisoner, and enables him cheerfully to engage in the service of God. (viii. 1—4.)

These considerations seem amply sufficient to show that, in the passage now in question, St. Paul is describing the experience of a person who is not yet in Christ, so as to be a partaker of the regenerating Spirit. And, adopting this view, it is comparatively easy to trace the connection of thought, and to perceive the vivid and emphatic character of the Apostle's representations. He had dwelt on the effect which is produced when the mind becomes fully conscious of its subjection to law, and when the law

15. For that which I do I *allow not : for ²what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that do I.

* Gr. *know*. Ps. i. 6.

p Gal. v. 17.

“comes” home to it, interfering with its desires, and enjoining duties from which it shrinks. He had spoken of *sin within us* as *an active principle*, ever ready to develop itself in resistance to the authority of God, and to resent the control of His commandments ; and he had shown how this principle of sin, roused into fiercer activity by the restraints of the law, and investing the forbidden object with delusive charms, *deceives* us to our ruin. And now he dwells upon another thought. He represents the principle of sin within us as holding us captive, impelling us, in spite of our better judgment, to acts of transgression, and exposing us to eternal ruin. He speaks of it as *a power to which we are enslaved*, and from which nothing but the power of the Spirit of Christ can rescue us. “I am carnal, *sold under sin*.” In the state of experience which he now traces, the false hopes which sin once inspired are at an end. The principle of sin has been brought out in *its true character*, and we *stand face to face with the awful consequences* which it entails. The mind, aroused and anxious, and, withal, perceiving that the demands of the law, in themselves, are right and good, now seeks to comply with them. But, as it puts forth this effort, it becomes conscious of its *captivity to sin*. It finds, to its dismay, that there is a power within it which baffles its aspirations after good, and impels it, as a slave, to act contrary to its convictions. Such is the conception which the Apostle briefly suggests in the present verse, and which he elucidates and enforces in those which follow.

Verse 15. *For that which I do I allow not : for what I would, &c.* This statement is advanced in proof of that

16. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good.

condition of slavery to sin which the Apostle had just asserted. In the original, both the words themselves which are here employed, and the order in which they are arranged, are remarkably graphic and forcible. The word used in the first clause primarily means "*know*," as the marginal reading shows; but it often conveys an allusion to *regarding with favour or approval*. The sentiment here suggested is, that the conduct of the person spoken of is *not* the result of *deliberate consideration and choice*; but rather of a power within him, which impels him, as a slave, to do its bidding. And the Apostle adds, in confirmation of this view, "For not what I wish, that do I, but what I hate, this do I." The state described, then, is that of helpless captivity to sin. Even that against which the conscience protests, and which is regarded with settled disapprobation, is again and again done; while that which the mind views with approval, and sincerely wishes to perform, is not carried into effect when the hour of trial comes.

Verse 16. *If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.* Here the Apostle, still pursuing the course of thought upon which he had just entered, fixes our attention upon the state of the mind which, while wishing to walk in the path of duty, is impelled by the principle of sin into a course of transgression. Its *settled convictions*, he affirms, may be in favour of the Divine law: the excellence—the *moral beauty*—of the law (for this is the idea suggested by the term "good" in this verse) may be fully admitted and acknowledged. Once its restraints were resented, as interfering with our gratifica-

17. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

tions ; but now all its prohibitions and all its requirements are allowed to be right and proper. But this consent of the mind to the law leaves man spiritually impotent, until the power which enslaves him has been broken by the communication of a higher life,—a life which only the Spirit of God can impart and sustain.

Verse 17. *Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* In these words, which are repeated in verse 20, St. Paul draws a conclusion from what he had just advanced. His reasonings in verses 15, 16, were intended to establish the fact, that the person whose experience he is describing is "*sold under sin*,"—a slave to sin within him. And the inference which he now draws from these reasonings is, that it is even so. At the first view, the language which he employs in stating this conclusion is strange and startling : but when we come carefully to look at it, every difficulty vanishes. St. Paul, throughout this argument, graphically represents sin as *a principle and power within us*, which holds us in bondage, and which sports with the convictions of the judgment, and the better aspirations of the soul. Contrasting the actings of this power with those of the understanding and the conscience, he speaks of the latter as representing our *proper self*, while he regards sin within us as a *foreign and foul element* introduced into our nature, the subjugation and expulsion of which are necessary to restore that nature to freedom and blessedness. Thus it is that he says,—depicting, in the most vivid colours, our captivity to sin,—“Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” But it would be a perversion and abuse

18. For I know that *in me* (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with

q Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21.

of these words, if we regarded them as setting aside the responsibility of a man in this state of mind for the sinful actions which he performs. And it would be a still more fearful abuse of them, if we viewed St. Paul as insinuating, that any man who practises iniquity, whether he struggles against it or not, may exonerate himself from guilt by falling back on the fact, that he is impelled onward to a course of evil by "sin dwelling in him." Such a sentiment is at variance with the entire teaching of the Apostle, and it stands reproved by his solemn declaration, in reference to the imperious tyrant sin, that "the wages of sin is death." His object, in the passage before us, is rather to show that the state of man, when no longer deceived by sin, but fully alive to its real character and tendency, is yet one of subjection to its power. In the war which so often takes place in the human spirit, while yet unregenerate, sinful passion triumphs, not only when it can succeed in *silencing* the judgment, or *perverting* its decisions, but even while the conscience continues to condemn, and is in the very act of lifting up its voice of censure and warning.

Verse 18. *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present &c.* Here St. Paul states the conclusion which our utter want of power, in our unregenerate state, to carry into effect the better desires and aspirations of the mind, must force upon the man who reflects upon this inward struggle, and marks its issue. That conclusion is, that by nature we are destitute of "good,"—we are without those inward principles of

me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.

purity and love which alone can enable us to practise that which is morally beautiful, and to yield a spiritual obedience to God. But he guards against the idea, that this was, at that very time, *his own* state, which the strong language that he uses might, at the first view, suggest. He introduces an explanatory and qualifying clause, for the very purpose of shutting out such a supposition: "I know that in me—that is, in *my flesh*—dwelleth no good thing." In the note on verse 5, the import of the phrase "to be in the flesh," as it is used in this and the following chapter, has been considered. It refers to *our unregenerate state*,—our state before we become partakers of the Spirit of Christ. In that state, the Apostle affirms, we are destitute of holy principles, and incapable of spiritual obedience. Without the energy of the Holy Ghost producing gracious desires and calling forth effort, we have no spiritual feeling; and until He renews our heart, and by the fulness of His life-giving power rescues us from our spiritual captivity, we cannot walk in the path of holy obedience. Even those aspirations after good which the Apostle describes as coming into conflict with our sinful tendencies, though in that conflict they fail until, in utter helplessness and self-abandonment, we cast ourselves upon the Lord Jesus,—even these are to be ascribed to His preparatory operations. Nature does not originate them: they are awakened by the grace of the Spirit, sent down "to convince of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," and, by the disclosure of our captivity and ruin, to lead us to Him who can burst our fetters, and introduce us to the liberty of the children of God.

19. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

20. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

21. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

Verses 19, 20. *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, &c.* Still the Apostle dwells on the inability of man, of himself, to escape from his thralldom to sin, and to carry into effect the purposes of good which, in his better moments, he forms. So great is the power of "sin dwelling in us," that we not only fail of performing the good which we approve and desire, but we are hurried into the indulgence of feelings, and even into outward acts, from which our judgment and conscience recoil, and which leave us filled with anguish, and appalled by the anticipation of judgment. A mightier arm than our own is required to set us free; and a new life must be breathed into our souls, or sin will yet assert its dominion, and triumph over our purposes of good.

Verse 21. *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.* In this verse St. Paul first uses the term "law" in that peculiar sense which is characteristic of this branch of his argument. He speaks in verse 23 of "a law in our members," and of "the law of sin which is in our members;" and he speaks, also, of "the law of the mind." In viii. 2 he mentions "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," and "the law of sin and death." Now, in all these cases, the term refers to a *power* which either *actually rules*, or at least *claims to rule*, and that not fitfully and arbitrarily, but according to a *definite mode*,

22. For I ^rdelight in the law of God after ^tthe inward man :

23. But ^sI see another law in ^umy members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

^r Psalm i. 2. ^s 2 Cor. iv. 16; Ephes. iii. 16; Col. iii. 9, 10.

^t Gal. v. 17. ^u Rom. vi. 13, 19.

and with a view to a *definite result*. No other word could so fully and strongly indicate all this; and the distinct apprehension of these particulars will show the force and comprehensiveness of the Apostle's statements. Here he affirms, that the conflict which so often goes on in the mind not yet regenerate, between its better aspirations and its sinful tendencies, *reveals* this melancholy fact, that there is a power, *steadily operating*, to frustrate its purposes of good, and to impel it into evil. Such appears to be the special import of the words, "*I find, then, a law,*" with which this renewed statement of our impotence for good is introduced.

Verses 22, 23. *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man : but I see another law in my members, warring against &c.* Here the two powers which claim to rule the man in whose mind aspirations after good have been awakened, are represented, in a manner the most graphic, as coming into hostile collision. The anxious spirit has become increasingly restless under the dominion of evil, and sighs and struggles for deliverance. It perceives, more clearly than ever, the rectitude and goodness of the Divine precepts, and the moral loveliness of those principles which the law enjoins. *Now* the thoughtful and earnest seeker of deliverance can even affirm, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." But "the law of the

24. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from || the body of this death ?

|| Or, *this body of death.*

mind,"—the power of the judgment and conscience,—though it strives to rule, is met by "the law of sin in the members;" and in this conflict, fearful and protracted as it sometimes is, sin triumphs, and the man remains a *prisoner* under the dominion of evil. Thus the utmost strength of nature is baffled, and nothing remains but either a state of hopeless bondage to sin, or the interposition of a higher power to effect our deliverance.

Verse 24. *O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?* This exclamation forcibly represents the state of feeling which is realised, as the protracted struggle between inward sin and the convictions and resolves of the mind closes in the victory of the former. The awakened and anxious sinner, wearied with his repeated failures, gives up all hope of effecting his own rescue from the power that oppresses him, and which is hurrying him onward to eternal death. He feels that deliverance, if it comes at all, must come from without. In the bitterness of his sorrow, and the depth of his misery, he asks, 'Is there a Deliverer,—a Deliverer for *me*?' and then the gospel reveals to him the rich and ample provision of God for his recovery, and peace, and holiness.—The last expression in this verse may be rendered either, "the body of this death," as in the text, or "this body of death," as in the margin. In either case, the *general* idea conveyed is the same; and the words may, perhaps, be paraphrased, 'this body, with the appetites and impulses of which sinful desire allies itself, and, thoroughly penetrating them, urges me onward into sin, and exposes me to eternal ruin.'

25. *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

* 1 Cor. xv. 57.

Verse 25. *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* This is the response to the mournful exclamation which the anxious and troubled spirit had just uttered. The Christian scheme reveals a Deliverer, and may justly, therefore, call forth thanksgiving to God. Before, however, the Apostle unfolds the deliverance which comes to us through Christ, upon our believing in Him, — the subject which occupies the beginning of the next chapter, — he marks, by a concluding statement, the highest position which man can attain, apart from the renewing grace of the Spirit, as one of bondage to sin. "*So then with the mind I myself,*" or "*the same I,*" "*serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*" The mind would fain yield itself actively to obey the Divine precepts; but there is a power pervading our carnal nature, which frustrates this purpose, and holds us captive. But we gratefully turn to the hope of deliverance which beams upon us, as we give up all confidence in ourselves, and weep over the failure of our purposes of good. The gospel tells us of ONE who can take away the stains of our past transgressions, break the power of sinful tendencies, and infuse into our nature new and holy affections, so as to mould our character afresh. Coming to Him with the burden of guilt still upon our conscience, and the fetters of our depravity still binding us, we realise deliverance. Appropriating His sacrifice, because God has told us to do so, and trusting our souls into His hands, our conscience is lightened of its load, and a new life, inspired by His Spirit, thrills through our hearts, not only causing us to delight in that which is pure and good, but also giving us power to perform it. Even the first

So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God ;
but with the flesh the law of sin.

view of the Lord Jesus as able and willing to rescue us, and to terminate the conflict under which we were sinking into utter despair, may well lead us to exclaim, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" but when we come to Him, and are accepted through His blood, we can adopt a yet higher strain, and gratefully declare, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus : for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

CHAPTER VIII.

1. *There is* therefore now no condemnation to

CHAPTER VIII.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

THE Apostle now passes to *the state and privileges of those who are in Christ*, in contrast with that state of subjection to sin and exposure to death which he had just depicted. He first affirms their freedom from condemnation, and their deliverance, by the power of the Spirit of Christ, from the bondage of sinful passions; and then he dwells on the economy of grace through the Incarnate Son of God as accomplishing that which the law, of itself, could not effect, and providing for the actual observance of its precepts under the promptings of a new life imparted by the Holy Ghost.

Thus was he led to unfold *the work of the Spirit*, as given through Christ. He speaks of this Divine Agent as the Source of all inward life and power, and as the Giver of a peace and holy confidence which render communion with God attractive and delightful. He contrasts the state of mind which belongs to "the flesh," with that which is produced by the Spirit, when He takes possession of the heart. He adverts to the glorious *consummation of life in Christ* which is assured to believers by the indwelling of the Spirit; and founds upon this an earnest exhortation to Christians to renounce sin, and to develop in their lives the graces of the renewed nature. Again he passes to *the rich and heavenly consolation* which the Spirit imparts to believers, at the same time that He leads them onward in

them which are in Christ Jesus, who "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

a Ver. 4; Gal. v. 16, 25.

the path of holy service. He dwells on the office of the Holy Ghost to assure us of our *sonship to God*,—to awaken within us childlike confidence and love,—and to impart to us the hope of that perfect glory to which this high and blessed relation confers a title. On that *glory* he then enlarges, as that which shall not only surpass all the sufferings of earth, but shall meet the instinctive aspirations and yearnings of our common humanity,—yearnings which our present enjoyment of the Spirit's grace does not extinguish, but only directs to a definite and glorious object which answers to them all. He next alludes to the position of the Christian as *waiting*, in a course of persevering faith and obedience, for this triumphant issue. Then he speaks of the *gracious support* afforded to believers, under the infirmities and sorrows of earth, by the Holy Ghost; and, in particular, of the intimate access to God, and the power in prayer, which He gives to them through Christ. In glowing language, he goes on to express his assured conviction, that all things are working together to promote the real and everlasting welfare of the people of God, and he sets forth *the grand arrangements of the Divine counsel and scheme of grace in Christ*, which, bringing us here into a state of acceptance, is directed to our ultimate participation of the glory of the Incarnate Son of God, so that He may stand, throughout eternity, as "the Firstborn among many brethren."

Thus had the Apostle reached the very height of his great argument as to the justification, the spiritual life and power, and the glorious hopes, of those who are in Christ;

and now, in a series of *exulting appeals*, he dwells on the firm ground of confidence which we have, that all blessings shall be ours, if we embrace the Saviour and abide in Him,—that no condemnation shall light on us, since we have a saving interest in all the facts of His mediatorial undertaking,—and that the love of God in Christ, unaffected by the sorrows and sufferings incident to our probationary career, shall be to us an everlasting possession.

Verse 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, &c.* In this and the following verse St. Paul exhibits the state of believers in Christ, placing it in contrast with that condition of exposure to eternal ruin, and of conscious, though unwilling, subjection to the tyranny of sin, which he had described in the last section of the preceding chapter. The struggle which he had so vividly depicted had issued in a deep conviction of personal *helplessness*, and in an anxious inquiry for *some Deliverer* who could rescue the captive, and shed light upon his deepest gloom. Such a Deliverer the Gospel sets forth in the Lord Jesus Christ; and now the Apostle shows how, upon our coming to Him, the sentence of condemnation is cancelled, and a new life, infused by the Holy Spirit, liberates us from our spiritual captivity, and empowers us to render to God spiritual obedience. The phrase which St. Paul here uses, “them who are *in Christ Jesus*,” is full of rich and deep meaning. It expresses the great truth of the believer’s *union with Christ*,—a truth on which our Lord shed a degree of light in His last conversation with His Apostles before He suffered, as well as in His high-priestly prayer, and which is still further unfolded in the Apostolical Epistles. St. Paul had adverted to it, in some of its aspects and bearings, in the former part of chapter vi.; and now, in a single phrase, he presents it afresh

to the minds of his readers. This union with Christ is not a mere figure: it is a great and blessed *reality*. When we embrace the Lord Jesus by a self-renouncing faith, He becomes ours, and we become His. We have now a personal and saving interest in all that He is, and in all that He has done and suffered. According to the principles and arrangements of the mediatorial constitution, the benefit of His entire redeeming work accrues to us, and the Father accounts us righteous in Him. Christ Himself identifies our interests with His own, and loves us even as a part of Himself. His spiritual people are His "body," and His "bride." And in virtue of the relation to Him into which we are thus brought, by the faith that appropriates His sacrifice, the Spirit is given to us, to make us partakers of our Lord's own spiritual life, and thus to prepare us for the highest joys of fellowship with Him in heaven. Now the assertion of the Apostle in this verse is, that to them who are "in Christ Jesus" there is "no condemnation." The sentence that was against us is cancelled, and righteousness is imputed to us, upon our "flying for refuge to lay hold on" Him as "the Hope set before us." Nor, while we continue to rely on the Lord Jesus, and thus maintain our union with Him, can we come into condemnation. For this would imply that His redeeming work is imperfect, and insufficient for the justification of those who come to Him. But, instead of this, His resurrection from the dead proclaims the completeness and the availing character of His atonement; and assures us that, if only Christ is ours, and we are His, we are the objects of the Father's complacency, and may well exult in a title to eternal life.—The last clause of this verse, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," is wanting in the best MSS., and can scarcely be regarded as a part of the sacred text. It expresses, indeed, an

2. For ^bthe law of ^cthe Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from ^dthe law of sin and death.

^b John viii. 36; Rom. vi. 18, 22; Gal. ii. 19; v. 1. ^c 1 Cor. xv. 45;
2 Cor. iii. 6. ^d Rom. vii. 24, 25.

important truth,—that all who are really “in Christ” no longer walk according to “the flesh,” but develop in their lives the rich and powerful grace of the Holy Spirit. This, however, is the *result*, and not, in any degree the *ground*, of our acceptance. It is because we penitently trust in the Saviour, and are thus *in Him*, that the sentence of condemnation against us is done away, and the smile of the Eternal Father rests upon us.

Verse 2. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.* This is one of the most beautiful and comprehensive declarations in the writings of St. Paul. There is an obvious allusion in it to vii. 23, where the Apostle had set forth the issue of the conflict, in the case of an awakened, but not yet regenerate, man, between “the law of the mind,” and “the law of sin in the members,” each of which claimed dominion. That conflict had resulted in his captivity to sin; he was taken and held as a prisoner by that power which baffled the convictions of his judgment and the remonstrances of his conscience. But now another “law” comes into action, as the soul, discovering its utter helplessness, casts itself, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, on the atonement of Jesus, and is thus united to Him. The Spirit, who led it to the Saviour, now claims dominion; and, diffusing through it a new and hidden life, sets it free from its captivity, and enables it to enter upon a course of active service to God.—Every word in this brief statement has its own deep

3. For 'what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and ||for sin, condemned sin in the flesh :

e Acts xiii. 39; Rom. iii. 20; Heb. vii. 18, 19; x. 1, 2, 10, 14.
f 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13. || Or, *by a sacrifice for sin.*

significance. Our spiritual freedom, we are taught, is not brought about by the natural operation of truth upon the mind, but by the agency of the Holy Ghost. He, too, effects that deliverance by communicating a new "*life*" to our souls, and thus imparting to us a spiritual power which no efforts of reason could confer. The Spirit, still further, is "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus:" He is sent down by our risen and glorified Lord, and it is upon our being brought, by His agency, to a personal closure with Christ, that He fills our souls with life and peace, and thus bursts the fetters in which our corruptions had held us. And now, having taken possession of our hearts, He *rules* and *governs* us. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" actually *sways* the mind, and *forms* the character anew. Nor is this all. The "*life*" which the Holy Ghost imparts is *the earnest of eternal life*. Just as "the law of sin" is also "the law of death," even so the power of "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" prepares the soul for that world where the delights of holiness will be unalloyed, and will endure for ever.

Verses 3, 4. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son &c.* This passage may be regarded as winding up that section of the Apostle's argument which commences at vii. 14, while it affords a comprehensive view of the provisions of God for the recovery and holiness of man. No thoughtful

4. That the righteousness of the law might be

reader can fail to be struck with the fulness of truth which it embraces, or with the careful manner in which that truth is guarded against perversion. St. Paul first adverts to the *inadequacy of the law*, of itself, to meet the case of man. His former reasonings had clearly shown that, had we only the law to do with, our state would have been one of hopeless condemnation, and sin within us would have trampled on its prohibitions, and rendered its delineation of moral rectitude altogether ineffectual. The "life" to which it pointed, and to which, in the case of unfallen beings, it might have led, (vii. 10,) could never have been attained through it. But no reflection is cast on the law considered *in itself*. St. Paul had already affirmed, that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Its insufficiency, in the case of man, is made to rest on the fact, that it is "*weak through the flesh*." The announcement of duty, and the solemn enforcement of it by penal sanctions, cannot avail to implant the principles of righteousness; and, in the presence of sinful tendencies that oppose its requirements, the law is feeble, and sometimes altogether powerless. But now, the Apostle affirms, God has made provision for the accomplishment of that which the law, of itself, could never have effected. The power of sin may be broken: man, released from condemnation, and filled with a new life by the Spirit of Christ, may observe "the righteous precepts of the law," may habitually evince in his deportment and conduct the beauty of holiness, and may enter, at length, upon eternal life. The scheme of redemption, through which all this may be realised, is here unfolded in its grand arrangements. In that scheme we trace the *counsel* and *acting* of the Eternal Father:—"God, *sending His own Son*." The

fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

g Verse 1.

ineffable *personal dignity* of Him who came to redeem us is affirmed: He was "the Son," essentially one with the Father. There is a special emphasis in the words, "*His own Son*," distinguishing this glorious Person from every other. The mysterious fact of *the incarnation* is set forth in language beautifully complete and guarded:—"God sending His own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh*." The Eternal Son, carrying out the counsel and purpose of the Father, assumed our nature, not in the state of glory in which it appeared amidst the beauty of paradise, before the blight of sin had fallen upon this earth, but in that state of weakness, and languor, and suffering, which the curse has brought upon us. But His humanity was *perfectly free from sin*. In all other respects He was made like unto us His brethren, whom He came to rescue and save: but no stain of guilt ever polluted His spirit, and no unholy tendency ever had place in His flesh. The Apostle has clearly intimated this in the guarded expression which he uses. He does not say, "God sending His own Son in sinful flesh," which would have implied the actual sinfulness of our Lord's human nature; but "*in the likeness of sinful flesh*," thus marking our Lord's intimate relation to us, as a partaker of our weak and suffering nature, and yet showing that He partook not of our sin. From the fact of the incarnation, St. Paul passes, though in one brief expression, to *the atonement*. "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, *and for sin*." This phrase, indeed, viewed simply in itself, is general and indefinite: but, in former passages of this Epistle, St. Paul had pointed out the relation of our Lord's death to sin. We may

5. For ^athey that are after the flesh do mind the

^b John iii. 6; 1 Cor. ii. 14.

refer, in particular, to iv. 25 and vi. 10. The views there suggested would naturally rise to the minds of thoughtful and devout readers, as they pondered this comprehensive statement of the Divine scheme of human recovery. The assumption of our nature by the Eternal Son was in order that He might stand as the Bearer of our iniquities, and, having endured all the penal suffering which was to come upon Him as the Mediator, might open to us the path of life, and send down the Holy Ghost in all the riches of His grace. Thus has God "*condemned sin in the flesh,*"—not only evincing His own hatred of iniquity, while yet He welcomes the returning transgressor, but making provision for the *overthrow* and *destruction* of that "*sin within us*" which baffled the restraints of the law, and sported with the convictions of the judgment. For the Spirit is given through Christ, not only to lead us to Him in self-renouncing faith, so that we may be accepted through His blood, but to dwell in our hearts as the Source of a new life; and now, following His impulses, while we repudiate and triumph over those which governed us in our natural state,—"*walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,*"—we are enabled habitually to observe "*the righteous precepts of the law,*" and thus to glorify Him who has rescued us from thralldom, and brought us into a most intimate and endearing relation to Himself.

Verse 5. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.* St. Paul here dwells on the *contrast* which his last words had suggested. He had affirmed the design of the scheme of our recovery through the incarnation and

things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit
 the things of the Spirit.

6. For **to be carnally minded is death; but *to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

‡ Gal. v. 22, 25. † Rom. vi. 21; viii. 13; Gal. vi. 8.

* Gr. *the minding of the flesh*: so ver. 7. * Gr. *the minding of the Spirit*.

sacrificial death of the Son of God to be, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And now, as he looks upon the race of men, he distributes them into two classes, according as they have, or have not, come to Christ, so as to be made partakers of the Holy Ghost. There are those who are "after the flesh,"—whose character presents only the development of their natural impulses and tendencies, which, alas! involve estrangement from God, and other forms of depraved feeling. These "mind the things of the flesh,"—their thoughts, affections, and aims are towards the objects in which the unregenerate heart—the heart destitute of the higher life of the Spirit—seeks satisfaction and repose. But there are those, also, who are "after the Spirit," whose character has been moulded anew by His gracious power, and who habitually cherish and follow His guidance. These "mind the things of the Spirit,"—their thoughts, affections, and aims are directed to that which is spiritual, heavenly, Divine. They are not indifferent to the interests and hopes of earth: but they make them subordinate to higher objects, and the current of their desires and affections is towards that which is of God.

Verse 6. *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* It is confessedly difficult to give a *precise* and *literal* rendering of the

7. Because *the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, "neither indeed can be.

* Gr. *the minding of the flesh.*

1 James iv. 4.

m 1 Cor. ii. 14.

phrases which we translate, respectively, "to be carnally minded," "to be spiritually minded." The former expresses the state of the mind the current of whose thoughts, and desires, and aims is according to "the flesh;" and the latter the state of the mind which has been fully brought under the power of the Holy Ghost, and the current of whose thoughts, and affections, and aims is directed by His gracious influence. Of the former state the Apostle affirms that it is "*death*:" it is a state of present spiritual death, and one which must issue, if it continues, in eternal death. Of the latter he affirms that it is "*life and peace*." The gracious aspirations and tendencies which now fill the soul, and which are manifest in the conduct, evince the presence of a higher life, imparted from above, and which seeks its consummation in the realms of light and glory. And now, also, a sacred peace is diffused through the mind; for the consciousness of friendship with God sustains and cheers it, and its devout and benevolent affections, and its habitual self-control, tend to produce a sweet tranquillity and satisfaction.

Verse 7. *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* Here the reason is assigned for the fearful issue to which "the state of mind of the flesh" necessarily tends,—the everlasting separation of the human spirit from God, with the everlasting absence of "life and peace." The mind of the flesh, St. Paul affirms, is "enmity against God:" it is utterly averse from Him, and hostile to His

8. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

government. While the soul *surrenders itself* to the sinful tendencies which belong to our natural state, it has no relish for communion with God, and it rises in proud or sullen resistance to the restraints of His law. "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." There is a direct antagonism—an utter and irreconcilable opposition—between the state of the mind that turns to the things of the world and the flesh, to regard them supremely, and the holy law of God.—The humble and dutiful acceptance of the Divine precepts, and the earnest endeavour to comply with them, evince the preparatory operations of the Holy Spirit, drawing the mind to the Lord Jesus for deliverance, and peace, and purity. Left to ourselves, and cherishing the tendencies of our carnal nature, we stand in an attitude of hostility, and too often of proud defiance, towards Him who rules over all, and whose smile is essential to the happiness of every created spirit.

Verse 8. *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.* In these words St. Paul lingers on the opposition between the mind of the flesh and the service of God. In the original this assertion does not form an *inference* from the preceding statement, but rather presents, under a slightly modified aspect, the position of those who cherish and follow the sinful tendencies of their natural state. "*But they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*" No words can express more clearly or emphatically than these the *absolute necessity* of the grace of the Holy Spirit to enable us to do anything that shall meet the Divine complacency. While our conduct is merely a development of the principles of our unregenerate state,—until, indeed, the new element of spiritual life has been diffused through

9. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that "the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if

n 1 Cor. iii. 16 ; vi. 9.

our souls by the Holy Ghost,—we cannot pursue a course of conduct on which God can look with approval, or which He can accept as a branch of service to Himself.

Verse 9. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that &c.* This appeal to the Roman Christians, as to the spiritual change which *they* had experienced, is quite in accordance with the manner of St. Paul. A similar turn of thought is found in vi. 17.—It is a consideration of no little importance, that the Apostles were always ready to appeal to those who had cordially embraced their message, that, upon coming to Christ, they had received the Holy Ghost, to constitute them "new creatures." Now they were "*not in the flesh*;" their character was no longer moulded, and their lives no longer governed, by its principles and tendencies. They were, on the contrary, "*in the Spirit*," possessing an inward life imparted and sustained by Him, and constantly developing that life in their deportment and conduct. That this is implied in the phrase, "to be in the Spirit," is evident from what the Apostle immediately adds,—"*if so be that*," or "*seeing that*," "the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." These words indicate not an occasional movement of the Spirit on the mind to awaken gracious desires, and to call forth spiritual effort, but His constant presence, His habitual indwelling, to mould the character and influence the life. And such an indwelling of the Spirit the Apostle affirms to be essential to every true Christian. If we have it not, it is because we have not so come to Christ, and appropriated His sacrifice, as to be savingly united to Him, and invested with the privileges of His people. "Now if any man have

any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

10. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead

o John iii. 34; Gal. iv. 6; Phil. i. 19; 1 Peter i. 11.

not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." It is worthy of our attention, that the phrases "the Spirit of God" and "the Spirit of Christ" are used *interchangeably*, and that, in the next verse, the Apostle, referring to the great fact of the indwelling of the Spirit in the hearts of believers, says, "And if Christ be in you." The explanation of these variations involves many considerations of deep interest. The Holy Ghost is designated "the Spirit of God," as proceeding from the Father; (John xv. 26;) and He is properly designated also "the Spirit of Christ," as proceeding both from the Father and the Son. But this is not all. He is "the Spirit of Christ," inasmuch as He is the gift of the Lord Jesus, the glorified Mediator, to His people. From Him, as the Head of His Church, there flows into our souls the living energy of the Spirit, so that a *common spiritual life* may be said to pervade our Lord's humanity, and to be communicated by Him to us. Still further, the great purpose of the indwelling of the Spirit is to *assimilate* us to the Lord Jesus,—to bring us into constant sympathy with Him, and so to mould our character that the graces which adorned Him, as He tabernacled on earth, shall appear in us, and prepare us for the pure and heavenly joys of His immediate presence. Thus is the Holy Ghost emphatically "the Spirit of Christ;" and thus, too, the Apostle, varying his mode of representing the indwelling of the Spirit, says to believers, "And if Christ be in you."

Verse 10. *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.*

because of sin; but the spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

In this and the following verse, St. Paul passes to the *future prospects* of believers, as *influenced by the great fact that the Spirit of Christ dwells in them*. Such a change in their spiritual state must necessarily affect their condition in the life to come. Not only does it open to them the prospect of blessedness with Christ when the scenes of earth are over; but the participation of our Lord's resurrection-life which they even now enjoy, through the indwelling of His Spirit, gives the assurance that that resurrection-life shall ultimately pervade their entire nature. For the present, however, the body continues subject to the stern law of mortality. It is liable to languor, and disease, and suffering, and must at last sink beneath the stroke of death. This is the result of the sin which has affected and defiled it. "And if Christ be in you, the body indeed is dead because of sin." It is not the plan of God to exempt believers, as yet, from this part of the original sentence. The continued prevalence of the law of death, even in the case of Christ's spiritual people, is a public mark of God's displeasure against sin; while it stands connected with other important purposes of His moral government of this world. But in contrast with the continued subjection of the body to death, the Apostle places the "*life*" of the "*spirit*," as the result of "*righteousness*." There can be little question that the last term is to be understood in the sense which it so often has in the earlier part of this Epistle,—that of relative righteousness. The sentiment seems to be, that, as the result of our being accounted righteous in Christ, a new and imperishable life—life in the highest and best sense—has been diffused

11. But if the Spirit of ^pHim that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, ^qHe that raised up Christ

^p Acts ii. 24.

^q Rom. vi. 4, 5; 1 Cor. vi. 14; 2 Cor. iv. 14;
Ephes. ii. 5.

through our spirit, attracting it to God, and bringing it into fellowship with Him. This life the stroke of death cannot touch. Even when the body sinks under the power of the last enemy, the spirit lives, its powers expanding, and its holy affections becoming yet deeper, as it rises to dwell with God, and to enjoy the communication of His fulness.

Verse 11. *But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead &c.* Here the Apostle carries forward our views to the glorious consummation that awaits believers, when the life which now pervades their *souls* shall pervade also their once dishonoured and corruptible *bodies*, and raise them to a participation of our Lord's perfect triumph. Two sentiments, very familiar to St. Paul, and on which he delighted to dwell, are here distinctly recognised. The first is, that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is *the pledge* of the resurrection of all His people. They are to resemble Him in their entire nature. The scheme of human recovery is to find its predestined result in their being "conformed to the image of the Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren;" and it cannot, therefore, be, that their bodies shall for ever lie mouldering in dishonour and decay, since He, their Head and Forerunner, whose glory they are to share, has risen from the dead, and entered upon the realms of light. The other sentiment is, that the indwelling of the Spirit, to impart life to our souls, and to bring us even now into vital union with the Saviour, is

from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies
|| by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.

12. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

|| Or, *because of His Spirit.* r Rom. vi. 7, 14.

the earnest of that life which shall at last pervade and glorify this body of our humiliation. There is some uncertainty as to the correct reading of the last clause;—“by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Several ancient MSS. and other authorities have the genitive, διὰ τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος αὐτοῦ Πνεύματος; and if this is correct, the rendering of the text must be retained, and the Holy Spirit regarded as the great Agent in the final resurrection of believers. The sentiment which would thus be suggested is, that just as the Holy Spirit even now communicates of Christ’s resurrection-life to the souls of believers, Himself dwelling in them as the Source of hallowed feeling, so He will, at the last, complete His work by imparting of that life to their now dishonoured bodies. But the weight of authority seems rather to incline to the reading διὰ τοῦ ἐνοικοῦν αὐτοῦ Πνεῦμα; and if this be accepted, then the marginal version is the correct one, “because of His Spirit,” or “on account of His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” The sentiment of the Apostle, according to this reading, is, that since the body has become the temple of the Holy Ghost, it cannot be allowed permanently to remain in dishonour and decay. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of life, points to the resurrection in reference to the body which shall be glorified and sanctify by His presence,—the resurrection-life of the Saviour’s resurrection-life.

Verse 12. *Therefore, brethren,*

13. For 'if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do 'mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

s Ver. 6; Gal. vi. 8.

t Ephes. iv. 22; Col. iii. 5.

flesh, to live after the flesh. St. Paul now turns, in a manner which impressively marks his solicitude for the holiness of the Churches, and their consistent walk before the world, to the *practical lessons* enforced by the truths which he had just affirmed. The sentence before us is elliptical; for the Apostle, instead of distinctly stating to *what* power we *are* debtors, after denying that we are debtors to the flesh, hastens onward to point out the fearful effect of living after the flesh, and only *suggests* the other power in the clause in which he sets forth the blessed result of living after the Spirit. It is a beautiful and forcible conception which he here presents to us. Looking at believers as no longer subject to the dominion of those **unholy tendencies** which marked their natural state, but as blessed with the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, he affirms that *we owe nothing to the flesh*,—that it has no rightful claims upon our service and obedience, that we are under no obligation to follow its dictates, or cherish its tendencies; but, by implication, that we are under an obligation both of negative duty and of positive duty to **live and walk in the Spirit**, and to **resist the sinful tendencies of the flesh**, to **purge out the old leaven**, and **destroy our happiness**: the Spirit **purifies** and **ennobles** our nature, and **gives us an imperishable life**.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: the Apostle assigns the reason why we shall die if we live after the flesh, the result of obeying its dictates, **death**, **eternal, irremediable**

14. For *as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

u Gal. v. 18.

ruin of our nature. There is peculiar force in the original expression which we translate, "Ye shall die." St. Paul combines two words, μέλλετε ἀποθνήσκειν, so as to convey the idea, "Ye are *tending* to death," i.e., "Death is *before you* as the *natural* and *certain* issue of the course which you are pursuing." But when he speaks of the issue of the opposite course, "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, *ye shall live*," he uses the one word ζήσεσθε, because the life to which he refers, both in its present peace and comfort, and in the fulness of its everlasting joys, is "the *gift* of God in Christ Jesus." The phraseology of this whole clause is peculiar and remarkable. The expression, "the deeds of the body," recalls the Apostle's statement respecting "the law of sin in the members," and his exclamation, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" It seems especially to allude to those forms of evil which are connected with our physical appetites, and which are directly antagonistic to the purifying and ennobling operations of the Spirit. But, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the believer can "put to death"—can utterly renounce and do away with—those unholy works to which sinful desire would prompt, and in which it would display its energy. Thus the true life of the soul, inspired and sustained by the Holy Ghost, will assert its power yet more and more, and will expand, at length, into the glorious fulness of eternal life.

Verse 14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* In these words St. Paul in-

15. For *ye* have not received the spirit of bondage*æ* 1 Cor. ii. 12 ; Heb. ii. 15.

troduces another view of the position and privileges of believers, and one intimately connected with that glorious hope of perfect and everlasting life in Christ of which he had just spoken. All who truly embrace the Saviour are constituted *the sons of God*;—they are brought into a most intimate and endearing relation to the Eternal Father, in which their spiritual nature, derived from Him, finds its proper dignity, repose, and joy. In virtue of this relation, they have, through Christ, the right of free and intimate access to God ; they have a filial interest in all His perfections and in the whole system of His government; and their sonship to Him now possesses a peculiar dignity and value, since it stands connected with their relation to the Incarnate Son, who condescends “to call them brethren,” and to own them as the ultimate sharers of His own joy and triumph. Now the Apostle affirms that the grand characteristic of all who sustain this relation is, that they “are led by the Spirit of God,”—a statement which beautifully marks both the *constant indwelling* of the Spirit, and their *habitual* and *cheerful surrender* of themselves to His *guidance*. He does not occasionally visit them from without ; but He dwells within them, and they, in the whole course of their life, follow His dictates, and develop the holy principles which He inspires. There is, then, a most intimate connection between this declaration and the course of thought which the Apostle had pursued in the preceding verses, and which he still further pursues in those that follow. The high and blessed distinction of “those who are in Christ Jesus,” and are thus freed from condemnation, is, that they receive “the Spirit of life,”

again *to fear; but ye have received *the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father.

y 2 Tim. i. 7; 1 John iv. 18. z Isa. lvi. 5; Gal. iv. 5, 6.

a Mark xiv. 36.

who liberates them from their captivity, and enables them to walk in the path of holiness; and this state of life and power in Christ points to a glorious consummation, which corresponds to the relation of sonship to God, and in which the dignity and blessedness of that sonship shall have their perfect manifestation.

Verse 15. *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, &c.* Here the Apostle enlarges on the character and tendency of that influence which the Holy Spirit exerts on the minds of those who are in Christ, and points out its intimate relation to the privilege of sonship to God with which they are invested. In the phrase "the spirit of bondage" we can scarcely fail to trace an allusion to that painful sense of captivity to sin of which St. Paul had spoken in chapter vii. That consciousness of captivity resulted from the light and grace of the Holy Ghost, dispelling the illusions by which sin had once "deceived" the mind, and causing it to perceive the excellence and rectitude of the Divine law, and even, in some degree, to "delight" in it. But these convictions and better aspirations had been insufficient to triumph over inward corruption; and the issue of the protracted struggle was a distressing sense of bondage, leading the captive to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Now, however, a state of holy liberty and peace has succeeded to one of bondage and fear. The Spirit, as given to believers, is "*the Spirit of adoption.*" His

16. 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God :

b 2 Cor. i. 22 ; v. 5 ; Ephes. i. 13 ; iv. 30.

gracious action on their minds, as under His guidance they rely on the Lord Jesus, and are accepted by the Father in Him, assures them of their sonship ; and His abiding presence sustains their confidence, and forms them to the filial character. Their childlike confidence, also, associated, as it is, with childlike reverence and love, *seeks expression*. Under the prompting of the Holy Ghost, the justified man "cries, Abba, Father." No shy distrust of God—no guilty fear producing depression and anguish—now keeps him at a distance ; but he draws near to give utterance to the filial emotions which fill his heart. The change of person, in the last clause of this verse, is deserving of attention. In the former part, St. Paul appeals to the Roman believers as to their *personal* reception of the Spirit of adoption ; but after affirming, "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption," he adds, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father." This change seems designed to mark the fact, that the privilege in question is *common to believers* ; while the combination of the words "Abba, Father," indicates the union of different nations in the enjoyment of sonship to God, and the utterance of the emotions which are proper to it.

Verse 16. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* The testimony of the Spirit here referred to is shown, both by the context and by the structure of this verse itself, to be a *direct and immediate* testimony. The Apostle had just designated the Spirit as given to believers "the Spirit of adoption," and had affirmed that "by," or "*in*, Him we cry, Abba, Father."

17. And if children, then heirs; 'heirs of God,

c Acts xxvi. 18; Gal. iv. 7.

And now he goes on to say, "The Spirit *itself* beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." No language, surely, could have been chosen more distinctly to point out a witness directly given by the Holy Ghost to the spirit of man. To His immediate agency the substitution of childlike confidence and love for the fear which was associated with the consciousness of bondage to iniquity is ascribed. This, too, is clearly taught by the Apostle in Gal. iv. 4—6: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."—It has been made a question, whether the word *συμμαρτυρεῖ* implies a *joint* witness, or whether the clause might be rendered "testifies *to* our spirit." Authorities of considerable weight might be adduced on each side. We hold to the former view of the Apostle's words, as the most simple and natural, and as precisely corresponding to the fact. It is the Holy Spirit who, by His direct and immediate action on the mind, assures us of our sonship, and calls forth filial confidence and love: but this is followed by the evidence which arises from our consciousness of an inward spiritual change; and, in the progress of the Christian life, the testimony of the Spirit sweetly blends itself with this consciousness, and we are satisfied, by the Christian graces which He communicates, and the spiritual power which He imparts and sustains, that we are under no delusion, but that our peace and joy do indeed come from the Holy Ghost, the Comforter and the Sanctifier.

and joint-heirs with Christ; 'if so be that we

d Acts xiv. 22; Phil. i. 29; 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

Verse 17. *And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, &c.* The first mention of our sonship to God occurred in a train of thought which set forth perfect and everlasting life in Christ as the certain issue to which the indwelling of His Spirit, and our habitual cultivation of holiness through the Spirit's grace and power, directly tend. (Verses 10—14.) And now the Apostle, after enlarging on the office of the Spirit to assure us of our sonship, and to call forth and sustain filial confidence and love, passes forward to that *future glory* which is assured to us by this very relation. In the reasoning, "And if children, then heirs," there is an obvious *allusion* to the fact, that on earth children inherit the property of their parents; so that the relation of a child qualifies, and, we may even say, entitles, a person to be an heir. But the argument of the Apostle rests upon deeper grounds. The relation of children in which we stand to God, through Christ, involves a *special interest in God Himself*, in all the perfections of His character, and all the arrangements of His government; while it stands connected with the relation of *brotherhood to the Incarnate Son*, in our perfect and everlasting conformity to whom the purpose and scheme of the Eternal Father will reach its consummation. (Verses 28, 29.) It cannot be, therefore, that when we pass away from earth, we should either cease to exist, or sink down into a state of humiliation and woe. There must be before us, as the certain consequence of our sonship to God, a state of rich spiritual enjoyment connected with fellowship with the Father, and a participation of the glory of our triumphant Mediator,—such a state as is indicated by the words,

suffer with *Him*, that we may be also glorified together.

"heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Nor is this all. The indwelling Spirit, while He inspires filial confidence, assimilates our character to that of our Father in heaven, and attempers our souls to the spiritual exercises of that world in which God reveals His presence: and this operation of His points to the glorious issue of our eternal union with Him above. (2 Cor. v. 5.)—Into the depth of the expressions, "heirs of God," and "joint-heirs with Christ," we attempt not to penetrate. We can understand that they imply, that we shall dwell with God, and eternally reflect His glory; and that we shall be associated by the adorable Redeemer with Himself, as His brethren, and the sharers of His joy and triumph. But here we pause, feeling that our conceptions are still most imperfect and inadequate; and we turn to the beautiful language of another Apostle, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John iii. 2.)—The last clause of this verse, "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together," brings before us an important feature of the economy of grace. In some respects, many of Christ's true people, if not indeed all, are permitted to know "the fellowship of His sufferings;" but the result which the Eternal Father has in view, in permitting this, is, that they shall share His victory and glory. We conceive, indeed, that, in an important sense, the sufferings of the Lord Jesus are *unapproachable* by us. They were *human* sufferings; but they involved a depth of anguish which only *His* human spirit—perfectly free from the least stain of sin, and sustained by its union with His Divine Nature

18. For I reckon that 'the sufferings of this

e 2 Cor. iv. 17; 1 Peter i. 6, 7; iv. 13.

—could endure. But, in some humble degree, *we* may suffer with Him; not only bearing for His sake reproach, and shame, and persecution, but feeling on our spirits the burden of the souls of men, while we “travail in birth” for their recovery to God through Christ. And here the consolatory thought is suggested to us, that nothing that we suffer for Him, and for the salvation of the souls of men under the prompting of His love, shall be without a gracious recompense. Accepted ourselves through His perfect atonement, and sanctified and kept by His Spirit, we shall be “glorified together” with Him when the scenes of mortality are over.

Verse 18. *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy &c.* Here the Apostle dwells, with sacred exultation, on the *transcendent character* of the glory which awaits the people of Christ. He had already placed before us some aspects of that glory, in affirming that we are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;” and now, to illustrate, though faintly, its surpassing excellence and value, he affirms his settled persuasion, that all the sufferings of the present life—severe as were those to which he himself and many of the first Christians were subjected—are insignificant, and scarcely worthy of mention, in comparison of the consummated dignity with which we shall be invested, when the purposes of the Lord Jesus are accomplished, and His entire Church is gathered around Him, freed from every sorrow, and redeemed from every vestige of corruption and decay. There can be no question that it was to this blessed consummation that the mind of the Apostle now went forward. His words clearly point, not to the present happiness of departed

present time *are* not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19. For *the* earnest expectation of the creature

f 2 Peter iii. 13.

believers,—lofty as that happiness is,—but to a glory *yet future*, a glory that shall be *openly revealed*, and that shall embrace *all* Christ's people. (πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν δόξαν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι εἰς ἡμᾶς.) Indeed, he himself proceeds, in the following verse, to specify the great event which he has in view, describing it as “the manifestation” (or “revelation”) “of the sons of God,”—the public acknowledgment by God of all who really stood in that relation, accompanied, as it will be, by the restoration of that part of their nature which had sunk under the stroke of death, and which had lain, it may be for ages, in dishonour and corruption. (Compare verse 23.) On the glory which shall *then* “be revealed” he enlarges, placing it before us as that which shall meet the longings of “the creature,” and in which the spiritual people of Christ will find the consummation of their hopes.

Verse 19. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.* The passage which extends from this verse to verse 24 is confessedly one of the most difficult in the whole Epistle. It would be almost endless to enumerate the different interpretations of it which have been proposed, and to discuss their respective merits. The point to be decided is, To what, or to whom, does the Apostle refer in the phrases, “the creature,” “the whole creation,” or “every creature?” In attempting to determine this, it is manifestly important to keep in view the distinction which he draws between “the creature” and true Christians “who have the first-fruits of the Spirit,” (verse 23,) and to remember the emphatic

waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

g 1 John iii. 2.

manner in which the subjection of the creature "to vanity" is referred to as connected with the hope of ultimate deliverance and participation in the freedom and glory of the sons of God. Any deeper exposition of the passage will seek also to trace the connection between its repeated allusions to the sonship of believers, and the glory which will ultimately encircle those who enjoy that sonship, (verses 19, 21, 23,) and the statements of St. Paul in the preceding verses, in which he enlarges on these ennobling themes. Perhaps, among the various interpretations of the phrase "the creature," two may be said to stand prominent, being supported by high authorities. It has been held to refer to *all animate and inanimate nature, connected with this earth, as distinguished from mankind*. According to this view, the truth which the Apostle sets forth is, that, at the period of the Saviour's manifestation, and the glorification of all His people with Him, this earth itself, and its various tribes of sentient beings inferior to man, will be raised to a state of dignity and honour strangely contrasting with that condition of corruption in which they are now found, and corresponding to "the freedom of the glory" with which the sons of God, then revealed and acknowledged by the Eternal Father, will be invested. There is much to be alleged in favour of this view: and, more especially, it seems to be favoured by the comprehensive character of the expression, "the whole creation." But, on a deeper consideration of the passage, it will appear to be liable to several objections. Tracing the course of thought which the Apostle pursues in the preceding verses, we find that, having spoken of believers as the sons of

God, and, in virtue of that relation, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," whose sufferings with their Lord are to issue in the participation of His glory, he goes on to avow his settled conviction, that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." It is a glory *resting on believers*, as well as *disclosed to them*, of which he here speaks; and, looking at the intimate connection between this declaration and the passage which we are now considering, it would seem more natural to understand him as still dwelling on this glory, instead of stepping aside to refer to the glory which shall then be conferred on this earth itself and on the inferior animals. This argument, it is freely admitted, is not, of itself, conclusive: but it has a degree of force, and should not be lightly passed over. In the next place, a consistent exposition of the passage, on the supposition that by "the creature" we are to understand inanimate nature, together with the various tribes of the inferior animals, would involve the doctrine, that these animals will rise again. For the Apostle speaks of "the creature" as being "made subject to vanity" *in hope of a deliverance*,—a deliverance which shall cause them to *pass* "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Now the raising of the inferior creatures that may people the renewed earth to a far higher state does not imply a *deliverance* of that *very creature* which groaned, and which was made subject to vanity, if the *individual beings* are left to perish. But nowhere else, in Holy Scripture, do we find it taught, that all the tribes of inferior creatures, that have lived through all time, will be raised and ennobled when the great consummation takes place. We shrink from this theory, as having no Scriptural warrant, and as involving the most violent improbabilities. Still further, it is a decided objection to this view,

that in verses 22, 23, the Apostle places "the whole creation" or "every creature" in contrast *not* with *mankind generally*, but with *believers*, in whom the Spirit dwells as the earnest of their completed redemption. We can scarcely suppose that his comprehensive statement, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," should refer only to inanimate nature and to the inferior animals, and that *no notice* should be taken of the groans and sighs of men who know not the gospel, and on whom its cheering hope of deliverance from the sorrows and pains of mortality, and from the corruption into which the body is destined to sink, has never beamed. Plausible as this interpretation, at the first view, appears to be, it cannot, we conceive, be sustained. Some deeper truth, intimately connected with the perfected glory of believers, seems to have occupied the mind of the Apostle, when he wrote this remarkable passage.

The other interpretation alluded to is that which refers "the creature" and "every creature" to the whole mass of *unconverted men*, including all who have never heard of Christ. The sentiment of the Apostle is thus conceived to be, that the great object which the gospel holds forth to our hope, as it discloses the glory which will be revealed at the manifestation of the sons of God, answers to the undefined longings of unconverted men, and even of heathens, who, in their ignorance of God or alienation from Him, have yet groaned under the burden of mortality, and have sighed as the stern law of death has cut short their purposes, and stamped "vanity" upon their earthly life. This exposition brings out the full force of the contrast in verse 23, where the Apostle speaks of believers, notwithstanding that they have within them the earnest of their perfect deliverance, still groaning under their conscious subjection to the law of mortality, which consigns a

part of their nature to corruption and decay. The sentiment thus elicited is obviously in accordance with St. Paul's general modes of thought, and harmonises with the scope of his reasoning in this part of the Epistle. But this interpretation is liable to one serious objection. How, it may be asked, if the phrases "the creature," "every creature," be understood of unconverted men *as such*, and as *distinguished* from the true people of Christ, can it be affirmed, that "the creature itself also *shall be delivered* from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God?" Too many, alas! of the unconverted continue in sin, and persist in rejecting the overtures of reconciliation; and the teaching of the Apostle, as of his blessed Master, is, that all such perish everlastingly. "For the wages of sin is DEATH: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." No truth had been more distinctly brought out by St. Paul in this Epistle, than that the personal reception of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith is essential, on the part of all to whom He is made known, to a saving interest in Him, and the ultimate enjoyment of His glory.

The interpretation which we would suggest differs slightly from this last, and is free from the objection to which we have now referred, while it preserves the grand sentiment which this exposition makes prominent, and which commends itself by its accordance with the habits of thought familiar to St. Paul. We conceive, then, that the phrases, "the creature," and "the whole creation," or "every creature," refer *not* to *unconverted men, as such*, but to *universal humanity*, considered *without any reference to the development of personal character*, and solely with reference to its *natural and instinctive tendencies*. That these phrases may be understood of *all mankind*, and need not be extended to the inferior creatures, or to inanimate nature

20. For ⁴the creature was made subject to vanity,

A Verse 22 ; Gen. iii. 19.

generally, is evident from the use of the latter in Col. i. 23, "The gospel which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven." So also we read in Mark xvi. 15, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Of man, *regarded simply as man*, the Apostle affirms, that there is an instinctive shrinking from death and corruption, and an instinctive longing after a better state,—a state which no decay shall impair, and in which the hope of satisfaction and rest, which is here again and again baffled and frustrated, shall be actually realised,—such a state, in short, as the Christian scheme reveals as that which shall be ushered in by "the manifestation of the sons of God." And then he goes on to say, that even in the case of those who enjoy the new life of the Spirit, and thus have the earnest of their consummated blessedness within them, *these instinctive cravings remain* ;—"the bondage of corruption," to which our physical nature is subjected, is still felt to be humiliating and oppressive, and the soul, renewed as it is by the Spirit of God, and already possessed of deep and hidden joys, longs for that higher state in which the body shall be redeemed from dishonour and decay, and the full glory of sonship to God shall be openly manifested. Such an interpretation beautifully harmonises with the general sentiment expressed in verse 18. The glory which awaits believers meets the undefined but deeply-seated and instinctive longings of universal humanity, while it will remedy the ills, and compensate for the sufferings, of the present state. The solution of any apparent difficulty attaching to this interpretation, from the expressions used in verses 20, 21, will be found in the notes on those verses.

not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected *the same* in hope,

Verse 20. *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope.* Assuming the correctness of the interpretation of "the creature," or "the creation," given in the preceding note, we find the Apostle here affirming, first of all, the *subjection* of all mankind to the stern law of death, so that, however we may struggle against it, we cannot escape from it. The word, too, which he uses to express *the state* to which universal humanity has now been reduced, is most instructive and forcible. "The creation," he tells us, "was made subject to *vanity*." The law of corruption and decay, which holds us in bondage, mocks our earthly hopes, and stamps the character of *vanity* upon our earthly life. Even amidst its activities and joys, a sense of *emptiness* often arises in our souls, while the knowledge that there is before us a change which shall sever all the relations of earth, and consign the body to the grave, casts a gloom over our minds,—unless, indeed, the bright *hopes* which the gospel inspires are realised and cherished. But this subjection of mankind to vanity is the result of a *Divine appointment*, resting on the first fatal transgression. Man strives against it in vain: the sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," is still enforced. It has been made a question, whether the expression, "by reason of him who hath subjected the same," should be understood of Adam, whose repudiation of the Divine authority brought condemnation and death upon his race, or of God, whose *sentence*, following upon the sin of our first head and representative, really subjected mankind to that law of corruption which mocks their projects and

21. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

their hopes. We take the latter view, as being most consistent with the strong term "subjected," and as being required by the statement, that this subjection was "*in hope*" of a deliverance. That hope came not from Adam, but from Him who, even in placing mankind under the law of corruption and decay, designed a scheme of recovery under which that law should be at length reversed.

Verse 21. *Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption &c.* There is a most intimate connection between this verse and the preceding one; and we conceive, in common with several interpreters, that the word *ὅτι* should not be rendered "*because*," but, as in so many other places, "*that*." The statement of the Apostle will then be, that even the sentence which subjected universal man to vanity was connected with "*the hope that the creature itself*"—our human nature considered as that on which the stroke of mortality descends—"shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." According to this view, the sentiment on which the Apostle here seeks to fix attention is, that *human nature* was never designed by God to be *permanently* subjected to corruption; and that even when His sentence fell on man, He had in view that wondrous scheme of recovery under which all who should embrace the offered mercy should rise to the freedom and dignity of the children of God, being associated even with the Incarnate Son in His victory over death and in the fulness of His joy.—But it is not implied in this, that a glorious resurrection awaits every man. The sentiment of

22. For we know that || the whole creation
'groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

|| Or, *every creature*. Mark xvi. 15; Col. i. 23. i Jer. xii. 11.

the Apostle holds good, if only the economy of grace, present to the Divine mind, *provided* for every man upon whom the stroke of death might fall *the means* of attaining at last a state of deliverance and glory. And, amidst the shadows which rest upon the history of this world, there are many rays of light and comfort to the thoughtful and devout mind. This, at least, is certain, that while they who have rejected the Saviour, or treated Him with persevering neglect, must perish everlastingly, all who have "received Him" enjoy eternal life in Him, and millions upon millions, from every region of the earth, have passed away in infancy and early childhood, to be with Him whom here they knew not, but whose praises they now sing, and through whom their entire nature will at last be exalted and glorified.

Verse 22. *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.* Here the Apostle enlarges on the sentiment which he had briefly indicated in the expression, "*the earnest expectation of the creature,*" in verse 19. He connects the *undefined longing* after a better state to which he had there referred, with the consciousness of *present suffering*, and that suffering *deep and almost overwhelming*. One phrase which he uses is peculiarly expressive. He represents the sorrows and groanings of our common humanity as *birth-pangs*,—severe, intense, distressing, but relieved, in some degree, by the *expectation of a joyous issue*. "*The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*" There is a burden which oppresses our race, and from

23. And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have ^kthe firstfruits of the Spirit, ^leven we ourselves groan within ourselves, ^mwaiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the ⁿredemption of our body.

^k 2 Cor. v. 5; Ephes. i. 14. ^l 2 Cor. v. 2, 4. ^m Luke xx. 36.
ⁿ Luke xxi. 28; Ephes. iv. 30.

which we sigh and groan to be delivered. But at present it cannot be. The sentence of Jehovah consigns us to mortality and corruption. Yet, as we succumb to the stroke of death, we do so with a hope that something better awaits us; and to that hope the Christian scheme gives a distinct and definite form.

Verse 23. *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, &c.* The relation of this verse to the general argument of the Apostle has been already unfolded in the preceding notes. The instinctive longings and groans of our common humanity are not superseded in the case of the people of Christ, in whose hearts the Spirit dwells as the earnest of a higher and better life that shall never end. They *remain*; but, under their influence, the true Christian turns to that great event which will consummate the Saviour's triumph, and perfect the deliverance of His saints. The time is coming when even the body, which has been consigned to the tomb in dishonour and decay, shall be "redeemed" from every trace of corruption, and invested with unutterable glory. Then will our "adoption" be openly manifested and declared. It has been properly remarked by John Howe, and others, that in this verse there is an allusion to the usages connected with adoption among the Romans. There was, first, the *private* act of adoption, when a man of position and influence declared to any one that he took

24. For we are saved by hope: but °hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

o 2 Cor. v. 7; Heb. xi. 1.

him as his son; and then there was a *public* adoption, when the act was openly avowed, and registered in the public records. Even so, when the bodies of believers come forth from the tomb, assimilated to the glorified humanity of the Son of God, who, throughout eternity, is to stand as "the Firstborn among many brethren," will they who even here were constituted "the children of God" be *openly acknowledged as such* in the presence of assembled worlds. For this glorious consummation believers "*wait:*" they look forward to it with assured expectation, and the whole current of their thoughts, and feelings, and efforts is influenced by it. Then will the sorrows of mortality be swallowed up in the fulness of glory which shall pervade their entire nature.

Verses 24, 25. *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, &c.* In these words the Apostle carries out the thought which he had just made prominent,—that amidst all the hidden joys and holy power which believers now experience, their minds are directed to a still higher state which is *yet to come*; and that their habitual attitude is that of *patient waiting* for it. The perfect salvation of the Christian, he affirms, is still an object of *hope*: but the principle of hope *grasps it*, as secured to the humble believer by the Divine counsel. It *realises* the glory which is to be revealed when the Saviour's plans are consummated, and the sonship of His people is openly declared. This *hope*, inspired and sustained by the Holy Spirit, cheers us under the trials of the

25. But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for it.

26. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as

p Matt. xx. 22; James iv. 3.

present state, and upholds us in a course of active service to Christ. There is great depth of meaning in the Apostle's remark, "But if we hope for that we see not, *then do we with patience wait for it.*" The term rendered "patience" is much more comprehensive than the English word: it includes the idea of *perseverance in duty*, as well as that of the *unmurmuring endurance of trial and suffering*. And the sentiment of St. Paul is, that, cherishing a firm hope of the glory that is before us, we wait for it, in the earnest discharge of duty, whatever sacrifices and efforts that duty may require, and in lowly and patient submission to the sufferings which God may permit to come upon us, as a part of the discipline of the present life, and as a test of our fidelity to Christ. Nay, more: when the time of our departure comes, we resign our bodies to the tomb, assured that they shall not perish for ever, but that, though ages may elapse before the final consummation arrives, the Saviour's voice shall at last summon them from their resting-place, and His power shall invest them with dignity and loveliness. The long "waiting" for the full accomplishment of the Saviour's plan does not depress us: in the exercise of "patience,"—a patience sustained by our Christian "hope,"—we yield ourselves up to the Divine will, assured that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

Verse 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmi-*

we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

q Zech. xii. 10; Ephes. vi. 18.

ties; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: &c. Here the Apostle presents to us another office of the Holy Spirit. In the course of this chapter he had spoken of Him as rescuing us, upon our embracing the Lord Jesus, from our captivity to sin, assuring us of our sonship to God, and forming the earnest of the perfect glory that awaits us. And now he adverts to the fact, that His gracious action on our minds has a special relation to our present state as one of *weakness* and *sorrow*. He draws us to God, to receive special succours, Himself prompting our prayers, and leading us to the mercy-seat for the actual reception of the good that we require. The first part of this verse contains a *general* statement; and the term which the Apostle uses to set forth the operation of the Spirit is beautifully expressive. In its primary meaning, it refers to the action of a person who, by taking hold of a burden on the other side, assists another to carry that burden. Thus forcibly does St. Paul show us how the Holy Ghost, condescending to our "weakness," and marking every trial and exigency of our present state, imparts to us His own hidden strength, so as to enable us to sustain the pressure of all our sorrows. But the Apostle passes onward to a particular example of the Spirit's gracious help,—the light, and power, and comfort which He imparts to us in *prayer*, considered as the habitual intercourse of the justified and regenerate soul with God. Under the ever-varying circumstances of life, and the manifold fluctuations of inward feeling, we may sometimes not know precisely what we should ask of God, and, if

27. And *He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, || because He maketh*

r 1 Chron. xxviii. 9; Ps. vii. 9; Prov. xvii. 3; Jer. xi. 20; xvii. 10; xx. 12; Acts i. 24; 1 Thess. ii. 4; Rev. ii. 23. || Or, *that*.

left to ourselves, we should not present our supplications in the very frame of mind in which they should be offered. But the Spirit Himself comes to our aid; and, shedding light upon the plans of God towards us, and melting our hearts into the temper of simple, reverent, submissive, confiding devotion, He "*maketh intercession for us,*" enabling us to plead with God with a power which is not our own. This *intercession of the Spirit* is clearly distinguished from that of our adorable Redeemer. The Lord Jesus pleads for us in heaven; appearing as the Priestly Representative of mankind, and presenting His own sacrifice on behalf of all who come unto the Father through Him. The Spirit's intercession is *through believers themselves*. His guiding, melting, sustaining grace enables us to breathe forth aspirations and sighs, which cannot be fully expressed in words, and to take hold of the strength of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Verse 27. *And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind &c.* The leading truth which is dwelt upon in this verse is, that prayers such as those to which the Apostle had just referred—prayers offered in the name of Jesus, under the gracious influence of the Holy Ghost—cannot ascend to the Father in vain. The deep meaning of the aspirations which the Spirit awakens, and the pleadings to which He prompts, is known to "*Him that searcheth the hearts.*" Our failure to give full and exact expression to these hallowed desires and these deep emotions will not bar the answer of peace and comfort.

intercession for the saints 'according to the will of God.

28. And we know that all things work together

∴ 1 John v. 14.

Nor is this all. The Apostle adverts to another thought,—that the prayers which we thus breathe forth are in accordance with "the will of God." Following the gracious impulse of the Holy Ghost, and surrendering our minds to His elevating and purifying energy, we ask for those *spiritual blessings* which it is the delight of God to bestow upon His people, and the communication of which tends to the accomplishment of His own gracious designs respecting them. Thus, under the pressure of our weakness and our trials, we have a refuge in prayer to our Father,—our Father who has adopted us through His Incarnate Son; and in these our prayers the Holy Ghost Himself helps our weakness, and pleads our cause. We are brought into communion with the Triune Deity; our troubled spirits are calmed and strengthened; and, even when just ready to sink under our burden, we are upheld and gladdened with the foretaste of eternal life.

Verse 28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.* From the succour which the Holy Spirit affords to believers, under the pressure of their sorrows, the Apostle passes to the animating truth, that *all things*, however trying and apparently adverse, are contributing to their *real welfare*,—that they are "working together," under the mysterious but powerful guidance of the Eternal Father, to accomplish that gracious result to which His "purpose," His counsel, has respect, even the everlasting triumph of all Christ's people with Himself in the realms of light and glory. He speaks of this truth as

for good to them that love God, to them 'who are the called according to *His* purpose.

t Rom. ix. 11, 23, 24; 2 Tim. i. 9.

held by himself, and by all thoughtful Christians, as a matter of *assured conviction*; so that amidst the fluctuations of outward circumstances, they have a firm and sufficient ground of comfort. The events of life are *not isolated*: there is a *plan* in God's dealings with His people, and all that He permits to come upon them from without is *taken up* into that plan, and contributes to the great issue which He has in view. It is instructive to mark the two designations by which St. Paul here specifies the persons to whom he refers. First, he mentions a leading feature of their religious character;—they "*love God.*" The principle of love to God is ever represented in Scripture as the first and ruling disposition of the pious mind; and although the Apostle had not explicitly dwelt upon it in this Epistle, several of his statements had implied its existence in the heart of every true believer. The Holy Ghost, he had affirmed, is "given unto us," to "shed abroad the love of God in our hearts;" and this blessed sense of God's love to us naturally awakens love to Him in return. He had spoken, also, in the present chapter, of the Spirit's being given to believers as "the Spirit of adoption," so as to prompt the cry "*Abba, Father*;" but that cry, while it is the language of confidence and freedom, is also the language of filial love. The possession of this principle, then, is necessary to warrant any individual in assuming that all things are directed to *his* welfare. For it is upon our returning to God in Christ, so as to be justified through Him, that God ceases to have a controversy with us; and hence the indwelling of His Spirit, producing holy love to

29. For whom *He did foreknow, *He also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of His

u Exod. xxxiii. 12, 17; Psalm i. 6; Jer. i. 5; Matt. vii. 23; Rom. xi. 2;

2 Tim. ii. 19; 1 Peter i. 2. *x* Ephes. i. 5, 11.

y John xvii. 22; 2 Cor. iii. 18; Phil. iii. 21; 1 John iii. 2.

Him, and causing us to delight in doing His will, may well sustain the conviction, that His providence regulates and controls all things so as to promote our highest interests in time and in eternity. But the Apostle adds a second designation of believers, and thus brings a new and most important element into his reasonings. He adverts to the fact, that they "*are the called according to the purpose,*" or "*plan,*" of God. They have been aroused by the awakening call of the Spirit of Christ; and having listened to and followed that call, they have attained to life, and are tending to eternal life. (John v. 25.) Thus they have come within the range of that gracious scheme of God which contemplates, as its great and final result, the actual glorification of all true believers with Christ, their Head and Forerunner. This "*purpose,*" or "*plan,*" St. Paul now proceeds to unfold.

Verse 29. *For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, &c.* In entering upon the consideration of this and the following verse, it is desirable for us to keep in view some of the positions which St. Paul has already established in this Epistle. There is so intimate and beautiful a connection between the several parts of the Epistle,—a chain of reasoning so close and firm pervades it,—that we shall unquestionably derive advantage, in considering almost any passage, from a distinct recognition of principles already laid down. We must not, indeed, so reason on

Son, "that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren.

* Col. i. 15, 18; Heb. i. 6; Rev. i. 5.

these principles, as to warp our interpretation of the plain words of the Apostle in the passage before us. The correct exposition of it will be one which, doing no violence to its terms, but rather bringing them out in their natural and proper significance, shall yet evince its harmony with the general principles which St. Paul had again and again affirmed.

In the very opening of this Epistle, then, he had assumed the position, that "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation *to every one that believeth*, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." In the third chapter, when unfolding "the righteousness of God," he had laid stress on the fact, that to *all* who believe in the Lord Jesus righteousness is imputed on the ground of His perfect sacrifice. And in the fifth chapter, he had argued at length that, just as the sin of Adam affected his whole race, even so the provision of grace in Christ extends to the whole race, so far as to open to all the way of justification and life. Now we conceive that these explicit and prominent statements of St. Paul not only warrant, but require, us to understand the words "Whom He did foreknow" as implying, "Whom He did foreknow as believing in Christ." So far from any violence being done to the Apostle's language by this interpretation, it is the very idea which would naturally suggest itself to any one who read the Epistle as a whole, and cherished a vivid remembrance of the general course of thought which pervades it. And from this position we advance to the more general one,—from which, indeed, many whom we esteem and love would dissent, but which,

to us, seems to be sustained by the uniform tenor of this Epistle, and of Holy Scripture generally,—that the *election*, the *predestination*, of God, of which the Apostle proceeds to speak in this verse, has respect to *character*. Perhaps it may be alleged, in opposition to this view, that this is to make the *ground* of God's election the worthiness of man, and to do away with, or at least to impair, the *unmerited grace* which distinguishes the plan of our salvation. But this objection is at once obviated by the consideration, that the feature of character to which God's election has respect is our *coming to Christ*, in the confession of our helplessness and ruin, to embrace Him as our own, and to trust our interests into His hands. Even this coming to Christ is to be ascribed to the operation of Divine grace; and the moral agency of man—which must be brought in *somewhere*, since we are placed under a moral administration—comes into play, first and chiefly, in our following and cherishing the Spirit's gracious drawings, or else our treating them with neglect, and turning away to the vanities of the world and the allurements of the flesh.

Now the distinct apprehension of this principle will enable us, on the one hand, to hold the Apostle's former statements in their full significance, and to rejoice in the universal offer of salvation and life which is made to mankind in Christ, and, on the other, to appreciate the rich and deep truths which are taught in the passage before us. The Apostle here exhibits the *scheme* or *counsel* of God as to *all who should believe in Christ*; he places before us the *grand result* which that scheme contemplates, even our perfect conformity to the Incarnate Son in His present state of glory, and our association with Him as His brethren; and then he traces the *leading steps* of the *process* by which this result is attained. In all this he calls

upon us to mark *a comprehensive plan*, which may well assure us that God never overlooks any of the interests of His people, and which may well justify the exulting exclamation, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

We have already referred to the bearing of the first clause of this verse, "Whom He did foreknow,"—that it is equivalent to "Whom He foreknew as believing in Christ." Several thoughtful expositors, indeed, extend the import of the word "foreknew," so as to include the idea of *choice*, or that of *special love*; but, if extended at all, it can only, we conceive, be in the sense ultimately approved by Tholuck,—that which includes *foreknowledge* and *recognition as His own*. Into the subject of the Divine prescience it is not for us to enter. The fact of that prescience is clearly revealed; but it involves mysteries which baffle the powers of the human mind, and the solution of which must be left to the clearer light of the heavenly state. We turn away, then, from this profound theme to the statement of the Apostle, that the counsel of God—His settled and determined counsel, formed before the foundation of the world—is, that they whom He thus foreknew as embracing the offers of grace should be "conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren." This conformity to the Incarnate Son comprehends both a moral resemblance to His character, and a perfect assimilation to the glory of His exalted humanity. The Apostle carries onward our minds to the grand consummation of the scheme of redemption, when the purposes of the Eternal Father will be fulfilled, and the Redeemer will receive the full reward of His deep and untold sufferings. His believing people shall reflect, at last, His perfect loveliness; their bodies, rescued from corruption and decay, shall be "fashioned like unto His glorious body," and He shall

30. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also "called : and whom He called, them He also

α Rom. i. 6 ; ix. 24 ; Ephes. iv. 4 ; Heb. ix. 15 ; 1 Peter ii. 9.

stand, throughout eternity, as "the Firstborn among many brethren," and, as He looks upon them, He shall delight in them as His own, while the relation which they sustain to the Eternal Father will illustrate the efficacy of His atonement and the riches of His grace.

Verse 30. *Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called ; and whom He called, &c.* Having fixed our minds on the grand result which the scheme of God contemplates, and in which all its provisions are to issue, the Apostle now adverts to the *leading steps* by which this result is attained. They who, as believers in Christ, shall encircle Him at last, and reflect His perfect glory, in fulfilment of the Divine counsel, were once sinful men. But God "*called*" them. The powerful voice of His Spirit, applying to their souls the announcements of the gospel, aroused them to spiritual feeling and effort ; and following the guidance of the light thus shed upon their minds, they came in utter self-renunciation to the Saviour. And now the Father accounted them righteous in Him. He "*justified*" them, upon their appropriating the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus ; and, investing them with all the privileges of righteousness, He conferred on them a title to eternal life, and called forth within their breasts the most joyous hopes. And at length those hopes are realised. The glory to which they looked forward is attained. Every vestige of mortality and corruption fades away at last ; and while the soul rejoices in its perfect union with Christ, and its perfect resemblance to Him, the body reflects His loveliness, and shares His triumph.

justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.

31. What shall we then say to these things? *‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’*

b 1 Cor. vi. 11. c John xvii. 22; Ephes. ii. 6.

d Num. xiv. 9; Psalm cxviii. 6.

In this statement the *prominent* idea of the Apostle is, that our calling, our justification, and our glorification, are all to be referred to GOD, and that the actings of His grace are put forth in fulfilment of a *great plan*, and with a direct reference to a most glorious and momentous *issue*. It was no part of his *present* design to advert to the exercises of spirit, on the part of *man*, which are essential to the attainment of salvation on earth, and to the ultimate enjoyment of the Divine presence: on these he had already dwelt in the former part of the Epistle, and even in the present chapter. (Verses 12, 13.) But, approaching reverently the mysterious theme of the Divine prescience, he speaks of those whom God foreknew as embracing the Saviour and cleaving to Him; and he shows, as to these, how their religious history, from the first moment when the death of sin was broken in upon by the life-imparting call of the Spirit of Christ, involved a *process* in which God’s agency appeared, and which He directed to the grand consummation that He had purposed,—even their perfect and everlasting conformity to the glory of the Incarnate Son.

Verse 31. *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?* Here the Apostle enters upon a series of *exulting appeals*, founded upon the great truths which he had now unfolded; and with these appeals he winds up his description of the privileges and

32. 'He that spared not His own Son, but *f*de-

e Rom. v. 6, 10.

f Rom. iv. 25.

hopes of those who are in Christ. The first of these appeals is intimately related to the position which he had assumed in verse 28, that "all things are working together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." The sentiment contained in this last clause he had amplified and illustrated; and now, fixing his mind on the great truth, that "God is for us,"—that He is carrying out, as to all who believe, a comprehensive scheme intended to issue in our perfect conformity to the Incarnate Son,—he argues that no one, even of those who may dislike and hate us, can really injure us. For He who reigns over the universe, and who can control every created agency, is on our side; and safe in the watchful regard of His all-seeing eye, and in the protection of His almighty arm, we may pass through the scenes of earth, assured that "nothing shall by any means harm us," but that even the discipline of our present state—trying and painful as it may sometimes be—shall conduce to our highest and eternal interests.

Verse 32. *He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not &c.* This is the second of the Apostle's exulting *appeals*, and it bears on the *depth* of the Father's *love* to man, and especially to all who embrace the Saviour, just as the preceding one bore upon His unbounded *power* and infinite *resources*. The Apostle fixes upon the stupendous fact, that God "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up" to suffering and death, for the recovery and eternal salvation of all who should penitently fly to Him; and he argues, that surely the love that has conferred upon us so precious a gift, and provided

livered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things ?

for us so costly a sacrifice, cannot but delight to bestow upon us "*with Him*," when we embrace Him and make Him our own, all blessings in time and in eternity. There is a depth of meaning in some of the terms of this verse which no exposition can fully disclose. The Apostle leads us to realms of thought, where we can only stand and adore, hoping that the mystery which rests upon the great themes may be partially dissipated by the clearer light of eternity. He dwells on the relation of the Son to the Eternal Father, and His consequent dearness to Him. There can be no question that the phrase "His own Son" is designed to distinguish Him from all others who may be spoken of as sons of God, and to point Him out as "the Only-Begotten." But if we venture to tread upon ground so hallowed, it should be with lowly reverence, and with a deep consciousness of the weakness of our powers. The mysteries of being perplex us. The further we advance in life,—if only we cultivate habits of careful reflection,—the more shall we be convinced how little we understand of the mysteries of our own being; and when we think of the Personal distinctions of the one Divine Essence, we shall feel that we stand on the verge of an unfathomable depth. But *this* is revealed to us, that the Son is *of* the Father, and yet is *one with Him*. If, for a moment, we may allude to the relation of father and son, as it exists among men, we perceive that it implies *identity of nature*, as well as the *communication* of that nature from the father to the son. But we pause. To us it suffices to be assured, that He who appeared on earth to redeem us, and who, when His hour was come, submitted to the death of the cross, was,

33. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? *It is God that justifieth.*

g Isa. l. 8, 9 ; Rev. xii. 10, 11.

in His higher nature, "the Only-Begotten of the Father." The gift of the Son to redeem us was, therefore, on the part of the Father, such a proof of love as nothing else could be ; and the argument is irresistible, that, if we only embrace the Saviour, He who gave for us His own Son, cannot but delight over us to impart to us all that is really good, and, in particular, that He cannot draw back from conferring on us, as the believing people of Christ, the life, and blessedness, and glory, which He came to provide for us. To do so would be practically to undo His own greatest undertaking, and to frustrate the design of His most costly sacrifice. We may rest, then, in the assurance that, if only we embrace the Lord Jesus, every blessing shall be ours as a matter of *grace*. "*With Him*" all things are "freely" ours : without Him we are destitute, wretched, and undone.

Verses 33, 34. *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, &c.* These verses contain the third of those appeals which the Apostle founds on the economy of redemption, and which he urges with exulting confidence. Adverting to the position of Christ's true people—those who are united to Him by faith, and in whom His Spirit dwells (verses 1, 9)—as "*the elect of God*," His chosen ones, gathered out of the world, and invested with privileges which bring them near to Him, he asks, 'Who shall stand forth to condemn them ? Who shall lay anything to their charge, justified as they are by Him who sits on the throne of the universe, and having an interest in the

34. ^aWho *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, ⁱwho is even

^a Job xxxiv. 29.

ⁱ Mark xvi. 19; Col. iii. 1; Heb. i. 3; viii. 1; xii. 2; 1 Peter iii. 22.

whole mediatorial work of the Redeemer?' It has been made a question, whether *all* the clauses of these verses should not have the *interrogative* form:—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Shall God that justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ that died?" &c. The original admits of this rendering, equally with that which is given in our Version: for the punctuation of the Greek Testament, as of other ancient writings, has to be determined, to some extent, by the judgment of the respective editors. The chief argument alleged in favour of the interrogative form is, that it is that adopted by St. Paul both in the appeals which immediately precede, and in that which follows (verse 35): but this is far from being conclusive, more especially as several verses are subjoined in which there is simple *affirmation* (verses 37—39). The sentiment of the Apostle is not materially affected by the change proposed; but, certainly, the *first* great consideration on which he dwells, to show the freedom from condemnation in which Christ's people may exult, is presented far more forcibly if we adhere to the punctuation of the Authorised Version. That consideration is, that it is GOD HIMSELF who justifies them: and then the question immediately arises, Who shall dare to dispute with *Him*? Who shall presume not only to share His throne of judgment, but even to reverse His decision? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God is He that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" This, we conceive, is the most natural view

at the right hand of God, *who also maketh intercession for us.

* Heb. vii. 25; ix. 24; 1 John ii. 1.

of the Apostle's language; and the sentiment brought out is far more comprehensive and powerful than if we understood the Apostle simply to ask, "Shall God that justifies them lay anything to their charge?"—St. Paul then passes to another truth which may well fill the Christian mind with holy comfort, as it contemplates its position under the Divine government, and looks forward to the future. That truth is, that, as believers, we have a *personal interest in every part of the Saviour's mediatorial work*. In rapid succession the Apostle brings before us the great facts in the history of the Mediator,—those which have the most direct bearing on our redemption and spiritual recovery, and which may well assure us that if we are *in Him* we are safe and blessed. First, he adverts to the *death* of the Lord Jesus. With peculiar emphasis he says, "Christ is He that died,"—thus suggesting to us, that it is not with some shadowy and typical sacrifice that we have to do, but with the propitiatory death of *HIM*, the mysterious dignity of whose person, the spotless purity of whose character, and whose position as the appointed Head and Representative of our race, all concurred to render His death a sufficient and perfect atonement.—Next, he adverts to the *resurrection* of our Lord, introducing this fact with the remarkable words, "*Yea rather, that is risen again.*" Doubtless his mind dwelt, as he wrote these words, on that view of our Lord's resurrection which he had set forth in iv. 24, 25. St. Paul was accustomed to regard that event not only as the crowning evidence of the Redeemer's claims, and the commencement of His state of

35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ?

exaltation, but as the Father's public and solemn attestation of the completeness and sufficiency of His atonement, and as a declaration that the way was now open to the justification of all who should believe in Him. And the inference which he suggests is, that if Jesus is not only the *Crucified*, but the *Risen, One*, then, in committing our souls to Him, we are safe.—In the third place, he adverts to the *session of our Lord at the Father's right hand*, intimating that in *this*, too, we have an interest, and that this may contribute to assure us of our safety, and to confirm our hope of everlasting life. For the Lord Jesus, as the *enthroned Mediator*, rules so as to bless and save His people ; and He has entered heaven as the *Forerunner* of all who trust in Him.—And then the Apostle winds up this beautiful and comprehensive statement by referring to the *priestly intercession* of our Lord on behalf of His people. This may well form a ground of unfailing comfort to us, amidst the sorrows and conflicts of this probationary life, assuring us, as it does, of constant access to the Father, and of the bestowment of the very blessings that we need. Nor is it a consideration of little interest, that this last statement of St. Paul brings the rich evangelical theology of this Epistle into connection with the equally rich evangelical theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the priesthood of our Lord is so largely dwelt upon, and its surpassing excellence set forth.

Verse 35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, &c.* This and the following verses embrace the *last* of the glowing appeals of St. Paul, founded upon the provisions of redemption. There has been a great diversity of opinion, both in ancient and modern times, as to the correct exposition of the

shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

phrase, "the love of Christ,"—whether it should be understood of *Christ's love to us*, or of *our love to Him* in return for the inestimable benefits which He has conferred upon us. At the first view, the latter interpretation seems to have a strong claim on our acceptance; for the particulars which the Apostle immediately specifies, "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" all refer to sufferings which might, indeed, shake *our* constancy, but which cannot certainly induce the Redeemer to withdraw His love from us. It may be assumed as unquestionable, that the Apostle's inquiry is not, whether these sufferings can *cause* any cessation of Christ's love to us: for the reason of the case, and the whole course of his remarks in this chapter, shut out such an idea. But, on the other hand, there appears to be a correspondence between the phrase, "the love of Christ," in this verse, and the expression, "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," in verse 39; and the two must be interpreted in a similar manner. Now the latter clearly points to *the love of God as embracing us in Christ Jesus*,—flowing forth to us through His mediatorial work, and rejoicing over us, *as united to Him*, so confer upon us every blessing, and to receive us, at last, to a participation of His own joy and triumph. May we not, then, consistently understand the question of the Apostle in the present verse as being in effect, this,—'Can any sufferings, however severe or protracted, can even the continual prospect of martyrdom, cause us to forsake the Saviour, and thus rob us of His complacency, and of that love which delights to save us, and to open to us a state of

36. As it is written, 'For Thy sake we are killed all the day long ; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

1 Ps. xliv. 22 ; 1 Cor. xv. 30, 31 ; 2 Cor. iv. 11.

endless blessedness and glory ?'—Nor should we overlook another sentiment, which is *implied*, at least, in these inquiries, if not directly intended by the Apostle,—that the varied afflictions of believers, though in the judgment of the world they may seem to indicate that they are cast off and abandoned, do not really show that they are out of the love of Christ, or that He has ceased to care for them. He permits these afflictions for wise purposes connected with the general interests of His kingdom ; and the consciousness that they are endured *for Him* cheers His people under their heaviest pressure.

Verse 36. *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long ; &c.* These words are cited from Psalm xliv. 22. They were originally used by the Church in a state of great outward affliction, when the truly pious turned to God for help and comfort, pleading His past interpositions on behalf of His people, and contrasting the blessings conferred upon their fathers with their own depressed and suffering condition. They are employed by St. Paul as singularly expressive of that constant exposure to death which he himself and the first Christians generally had to experience. So great were the trials, and so numerous and uninterrupted the perils, to which their fidelity to Christ subjected them, that the outward calamities which fell upon the ancient Church in the darkest periods of her history could not surpass, or even equal, them.

Verse 37. *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.* This is, indeed, the

37. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor "principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

m 1 Cor. xv. 57; 2 Cor. ii. 14; 1 John iv. 4; v. 4, 5; Rev. xii. 11.

n Ephes. i. 21; vi. 12; Col. i. 16; ii. 15; 1 Peter iii. 22.

language of holy exultation; and it may well impress our minds, when we reflect on the *depth* and *intensity* of the sufferings to which St. Paul had referred, and remember also their *accumulated* character and their *continuous* pressure. "Nay, in ALL these things we *more than conquer* through Him that loved us." The Apostle evidently labours for language sufficiently emphatic to express his grand conception; and he *makes* a word,—for this appears to be the *first* instance of its use,—to convey, in some degree, the thoughts that were struggling for utterance:—"we *over-conquer*," we "more than conquer." Thus he shows us, that not only is it our privilege to maintain our Christian principles, under the pressure of the severest trials, and thus to "conquer;" but that these very trials may strengthen our graces, confirm us in our relation to the Lord Jesus, and heighten our eternal reward. But all this is through the abounding grace of "Him that loved us." It is *His* "strength," secretly diffused through our souls, which "is made perfect in our weakness," and which enables us not only to rise superior to every influence that would estrange us from Him, but even to derive establishment and the assurance of a higher reward from all our sorrows and afflictions.

Verses 38, 39. *For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, &c. Here*

39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

the Apostle rises to the boldest strain of exulting confidence; and, looking upon believers as sustained by the hidden grace of Him who loved them, affirms that nothing, in the whole range of created being, can dislodge them from their position, as the objects of God's special love,—that love in the eternal possession of which they realise the very blessedness for which their nature has been formed. These words are the utterance of a faith that had already stood the test of severe and repeated conflicts, and that looked forward with certainty, through Christ, to a blessed and triumphant issue of this probationary life. But, underneath them, there is, we conceive, *implied*, that we must continue to cherish those influences of the Spirit which meet our varying circumstances of difficulty and emergency, and, in utter self-renunciation, must cling to the Lord Jesus. The cautions and exhortations which St. Paul again and again addresses to believers in this very Epistle, seem to show that this is understood. (See verses 12, 13; xi. 19—23.) But if this *one* point is guarded,—if only we turn to “Him that loved us,” and cherish the Spirit's grace vouchsafed in the very hour of trial,—then nothing can harm us, or sever us from the Father's love in Christ. The exhaustion and pain of “death,” even if it should be a death of ignominy and violence; the perils of “life,” with its activities and hopes, its anxieties, and fears, and sorrows; the assaults of the “powers” of darkness, marshalled under their *leaders*, and especially under Satan, the captain of them all; shall have no power to move us, or to destroy our peace. And as the Apostle extends his

view through all *space* and all *time*,—as he contemplates the events of this world, and anticipates the history of eternity, and strives to comprehend the whole universe of being in his grand conception,—he rejoices in the conviction, that “neither things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” To the man who, in conscious helplessness, cleaves to Christ, the victory is sure ; and the love of God in Him shall be an ETERNAL POSSESSION.

CHAPTER IX.

1. I ^{say} the truth in Christ, I lie not, my con-

α. Rom. i. 9; 2 Cor. i. 23; xi. 31; xii. 19; Gal. i. 20; Phil. i. 8;
1 Tim. ii. 7.

CHAPTER IX.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

THIS chapter introduces an important division of the Epistle. St. Paul had unfolded the leading arrangements of the perfect economy of grace in Christ, and the rich and ample blessings assured to all who are in Him,—blessings reaching to the eternal glorification of their entire nature. And now he turns to the bearing of the new economy on *the position of God's ancient people*, and their supposed *prescriptive rights and privileges*; and he shows that the *principles* which had regulated God's past dealings with them, and with mankind, are maintained under the gospel, though the Church of God is now constituted on the basis of a self-renouncing faith in Jesus and the open confession of His Name.

In entering upon this discussion, the Apostle first affirms his own deep love to his brethren of the race of Israel, and the intense sorrow which their general estrangement from Christ called forth in his heart; and he goes on to speak of the lofty distinctions which had been conferred upon them in the past arrangements of the Most High. Then, alluding to the character of the new economy, as one under which the Jewish people, *as such*, ceased to be the Church of God, and that Church consisted of believing Jews and Gentiles without any distinction, he maintains

science also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.

that no promise of God is violated in this constitution, and that no word of His has fallen to the ground. To prove this, he enters upon an argument, the successive steps of which require to be carefully traced.

First of all, he lays down the principle, that the mere circumstance of *natural descent from Israel*—or, to carry the argument still higher, *from Abraham*—had *never* been *sufficient* to constitute any man, in the highest sense, one of God's true Israel. In illustration and proof of this he refers, first, to the case of Isaac, in whose line, to the exclusion of that of Ishmael, the covenant was to be established, and the Messiah to arise. This case clearly showed that the principle of selection could not be that of natural descent from Abraham; while the peculiar circumstances connected with the conception and birth of Isaac suggested the profound thought, that the true people of God—the true children of Abraham—should be *born from above*, through a gracious operation of the Spirit, vouchsafed in accordance with God's *promise* of mercy. As another illustration and proof of the general position which he had assumed, St. Paul refers to the twin sons of Isaac, of whom, even before their birth, the younger was selected to be the ancestor of the more favoured nation. This, then, was clear; that in *no* period had the *mere* circumstance of affinity to Abraham been enough to constitute a man one of God's peculiar people. But in reasoning on this latter case, the Apostle passes to a second principle, and asserts the *perfect freedom* of God to dispense the blessings of His *grace* in the manner which *He Himself shall choose*. The "righteousness" of God, as the Moral Governor of the universe, will ever be maintained, and will, at the last, be

gloriously manifested : but, while this is the case, a wide scope is left for the exercise of His free and sovereign will, in the bestowment of religious privileges,—the appointment of the conditions of salvation,—the introduction of a new economy to supersede an inferior and preparatory one,—and the application of the principles of His government to the cases of individual men.

All this he now proceeds to illustrate and confirm. He dwells on the deep import of the Divine declaration to Moses, when his prayer, that God would show him His glory, was granted ;—that declaration implying, that it belongs to God both to fix His own terms of mercy, and to confer special favours and privileges on individuals. He then turns to the case of Pharaoh, who, by his repeated and determined resistance to God, had long deserved to be cut down, but whom God permitted to continue in a position of influence and dominion, for the brighter manifestation of His own power put forth on behalf of His people.

At this stage of the argument, St. Paul supposes some bold and energetic mind to break in with the question, “ Why doth He yet find fault ? For who hath resisted His will ? ” Instantly he reproves the arrogant and presumptuous spirit which would dictate such an inquiry ; and then he goes on to show, in reply to it, that God, without any interference with the rectitude of His judicial procedures, and the justice of the penalty which He inflicts for sin, might surely fix His own terms of mercy, and place men in different circumstances of religious advantage, and might well exercise His sovereignty as to the time and circumstances of the visitations of His wrath.

Two things were now conclusively established : first, that God had never tied Himself to confer peculiar blessings on the descendants of Abraham, simply because they were such ; and secondly, that in the arrangements of His

government,—in the bestowment of the blessings of His grace,—in the conferring of special religious favours,—and in the mode and circumstances of inflicting punishment for iniquity, God had ever claimed, and still claims, to act according to the counsel of His own will. These principles the Apostle now applies to the case in question. They showed, beyond a doubt, that there was nothing inconsistent in God's now constituting His Church upon a new basis, so as no longer to confer any special distinction upon the race of Israel, but so as to place all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who, obeying the Divine call, should come to the Lord Jesus Christ for justification, and then stand forth to confess His Name, on the same ground of spiritual privilege. Such a change in the constitution of the Church, he goes on to show, had been intimated in the prophetic Scriptures; and he winds up this branch of his argument by adverting to the fact, that many of the Gentiles, who were once afar off from God, had now attained to righteousness through simple faith in the Lord Jesus, while many of the race of Israel, who gloried in their religious privileges, but who sought righteousness by the works of the law, had failed of that blessing, because they stumbled at the evangelical method of justification, even a self-renouncing trust in the appointed Saviour.

Verse 1. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.* It was an appropriate and most fitting act, on the part of St. Paul, when about to enter upon a great argument which occupies this and the following chapters, to express his own warm affection for the race of Israel, and his intense desire for their conversion. The constitution of the Church, in privilege and blessing, in its former state, had been a source of jealousy, rivalry, and respect to their cherished prejudices

2. 'That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

b Rom. x. 1.

and hopes; and, in particular, it set aside the religious pre-eminence which they, as a people, had enjoyed. Many who clung tenaciously to the observances of Judaism, and who haughtily looked down upon the Gentiles, were disposed to regard Paul as the enemy of their nation, or, at least, as so imbued with love for the Gentiles who believed in the Lord Jesus, that he had come to look with coldness and indifference on his own people. In these opening words, he seeks to remove such an impression, by assuring his brethren according to the flesh, that their position and prospects awakened in his mind the deepest and most affectionate solicitude. The form of affirmation which he adopts is the most solemn that could have been chosen. He declares that he speaks as one "in Christ,"—under a deep conviction of his obligation, as one united to the Lord Jesus, to say only the truth; and he makes a direct appeal to Christ, as the Searcher of the heart, as to the sincerity of his statement:—"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not." Then he adds, that every word which he was about to utter had the sanction of his conscience, and that conscience enlightened and made more sensitive by the grace of the Holy Spirit:—"My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost." The occasions are very rare indeed, when such appeals would be proper or allowable: but the Apostle felt that his position was peculiar, and that, before he could reason with his Jewish brethren on the difficult and delicate questions which he was about to discuss, he must, if possible, banish their false impressions, and convince them that he really loved them.

Verse 2. *That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow*

3. For 'I could wish that myself were ||accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh :

c Exod. xxxii. 32. || Or, *separated*.

in my heart. These words are very expressive. St. Paul affirms that there was a *weight* of grief upon his heart, as he thought of the rejection of the Lord Jesus by the majority of the race of Israel; and that that grief was *continuous*. Never could he dismiss their case from his mind. Every day, every hour, he thought of them with solicitude and bitterest sorrow.

Verse. 3. *For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* Here the Apostle gives the strongest possible utterance to his distress of mind on account of the separation of so many of the Israelites from the Church of God, through their refusal to embrace the Lord Jesus. The word *ἀνάθεμα* properly signifies *a thing separated and devoted to destruction*; and the phraseology used by St. Paul, therefore, expresses endless separation from Christ as one accursed. But from this interpretation many expositors, in every age, have shrunk. Christian feeling has, not unnaturally, recoiled from the thought, that the Apostle, who loved Christ with all his heart, who had for many years made the service of Christ his one object, and all whose hope of the future was bound up with being with Christ, could really be willing, on any ground, and for any purpose, to be permanently cut off from Him. Some accordingly have taken the words as in a parenthesis, and have regarded them as referring to the Apostle's former state of hostility to the Lord Jesus:—"For I myself once wished to be accursed from Christ." But this construction

4. 'Who are Israelites; 'to whom *pertaineth* the

d Deut. vii. 6. *e* Exod. iv. 22; Deut. xiv. 1; Jer. xxxi. 9.

is forced and unnatural; and the introduction of such a sentiment in this place interrupts the order of thought. Others have interpreted the words as meaning, "I could wish that I myself were made an accursed one *after the example of Christ*;" and others, again, have understood them of excision from a *church-relation* to Christ *on earth*, without extending them to the future life. Neither of these expositions, however, reaches to the full and proper import of the Apostle's language. The solution of the difficulty must be sought in a different direction. The term which he first uses is in that form which expresses *imperfect* and *unfinished* action;—"I was wishing." It marks the wish *arising* in his breast, through his intense solicitude for the salvation of his people, though soon checked by his devoted love to the Saviour. His general feeling was, that he could do or suffer anything for the conversion of his countrymen; and there were times when his self-devotion almost reached to a willingness to be himself severed from Christ; but his Christian instinct drew back, and the thought was repressed and banished.

Verse 4. *Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, &c.* With beautiful propriety St. Paul now enumerates some of the *distinguishing marks of the Divine regard* with which the people of Israel had been favoured during their past history. He wished to show them, that he was not insensible to the special religious advantages which had been conferred upon them,—the intimate relation in which they had stood to God,—or the important position assigned to them in the development of the Divine plans. It might, to some extent, soften the prejudices of his Jewish

adoption, and *the* glory, and *the* ||covenants, and

f 1 Sam. iv. 21 ; 1 Kings viii. 11 ; Ps. lxxiii. 2 ; lxxviii. 61.

g Acts iii. 25 ; Heb. viii. 8, 9, 10. || Or, *testaments*.

brethren, to be assured that he fully appreciated all these things, even while he maintained that now, under the perfect Christian economy, all believers in the Lord Jesus, whether Jews or Gentiles, are invested with equal privileges. The several particulars which the Apostle specifies are of deep interest, and eminently worthy of our careful regard.

Who are Israelites. This was their *most honourable* appellation, and that which recognised them as *God's separated people*. Not all the descendants of Abraham, or even of Isaac, had that distinction. It was confined to the children of Jacob. And this appellation was derived from the name of dignity conferred on that patriarch, at a great crisis in his religious history. During that memorable night which preceded his interview with his brother Esau, he was permitted to wrestle with the uncreated Angel, and, in answer to his earnest and prevailing supplications, he received special blessing, and his name was changed to "Israel," *the Prince of God*. There was, then, no designation more truly honourable to the Jewish race than the name of *Israelites* ; and none that could be more welcome to them.

To whom pertaineth the adoption. The people of Israel were, in an important sense, invested with the privilege of *sonship to God*. This was distinctly affirmed in the message which God sent to Pharaoh by Moses :—"Thus saith the Lord, Israel is My son, My firstborn ; and I say unto thee, Let My son go, that he may serve Me : and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, thy firstborn." (Exod. iv. 22, 23.) Such a declaration implied that God

^athe giving of the law, and ^bthe service of God, and
^cthe promises;

^a Ps. cxlvii. 19.

^b Heb. ix. 1.

^c Acts xiii. 32; Rom. iii. 2;

Ephes. ii. 12.

had taken that people into a *most intimate and endearing relation* to Himself, and that they were the objects of His special *love and care*. They were gathered around Him as His family; and, while other nations wandered afar off, they enjoyed the blessings of His house, the privileges of His worshippers. In the highest sense, indeed, this was true only of the *spiritual* among them: but the gracious arrangements of God brought these privileges within the reach of all, and placed all in a position in which, if they were faithful, they would actually enjoy them.

And the glory. This term is general and indefinite; and it is not surprising, that there has been considerable diversity of opinion as to the precise idea which the Apostle intended to convey. The most probable view is, that it refers to *the displays of the Divine presence* with which the people of Israel were favoured, and especially to *the Shekinah*, the visible manifestation of Jehovah's glory, over the mercy-seat in the holy of holies. God was emphatically with that people, *dwelling in their midst*, and revealing His power and goodness in their behalf, while they walked humbly with Him.

And the covenants. The fundamental truth here suggested is, that God had taken this people into covenant with Himself, binding Himself to be a God unto them, and calling upon them to yield themselves unto Him as a people. With great propriety the Apostle uses the *plural* form,—“the covenants,”—in order to recall the solemn covenant-engagements into which, on two distinct occasions, God entered with Abraham; (Gen. xv.; xvii. 1—22;)

and to recall, also, the covenant which God made with the nation of Israel at large, a covenant which Moses, as the mediator between God and that people, ratified with blood. (Exod. xxiv. 3—8.) These covenant-engagements belonged to the race of Israel. *Some* of the blessings promised, as the possession of the land of Canaan, were specially theirs; and the *spiritual* blessings included in the Divine engagements were for *them*,—for them *first of all*,—though the very form of the Divine promise showed that they were *not* for them *exclusively*. And then the Apostle rejoiced to know that they had an interest—though in this they were to share with believing Gentiles—in the “new” and better covenant of which the prophets had spoken. (Jer. xxxi. 31—34.)

And the giving of the law. This clause brings before us two great facts in the history of Israel, as they journeyed from Egypt to Canaan. It refers, primarily, to *the solemn scene of Sinai*. That people stood before that mountain, and beheld it enwrapped in smoke and flame, while a thick darkness rested upon it, and the thunder rolled, and the lightning flashed, around it; and they heard the voice of the Eternal One, as He uttered the great precepts of His law. And then this clause refers to *the whole Mosaic legislation*. God gave to the Israelites, through His distinguished servant, an elaborate series of commands and ordinances, applicable to the several relations in which they stood, and calculated to promote their welfare as individuals and as a people.

And the service of God. Another exalted privilege of the people of Israel is here referred to. They were favoured with a system of *holy worship* instituted by God Himself; and though much of this was symbolical, yet was it symbolical of lofty spiritual truths, and calculated to instruct and impress every devout mind.

5. 'Whose *are* the fathers, and *of whom as con-

† Deut. x. 15. ; Rom. xi. 28. * Luke iii. 23 ; Rom. i. 3.

And the promises. The *gracious engagements* of God with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob descended to them, if only they walked in the steps of their faith and obedience; and the promises of blessing contained in the Psalms and the Prophetic Writings were placed in their hands to cheer and sustain them in a course of humble piety. Above all, the great promise of *the Messiah*, and of *life and blessing in Him*, was theirs,—specially and primarily theirs, though not theirs exclusively. His character, and work, and sufferings, and triumphs, were made known to them; and the abundant benefits which He should dispense were offered to their acceptance.

Verse 5. *Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.* In this verse the Apostle completes his enumeration of the distinguishing privileges conferred on the ancient people of God. Theirs were "*the fathers.*" They could look back upon the pious of old, especially upon Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph,—upon Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua,—upon Samuel also, and the prophets,—whose memory was enshrined in their Sacred Records, and many incidents of whose career were rich in instruction and admonition. And, above all, OUR LORD HIMSELF, as to His human nature, came of the stock of Israel. The crowning distinction of that race was, that when the Eternal Son stooped to take on Him the nature of man, He did so in the womb of a Jewish virgin.—The accuracy of our translation of this important verse has been, again and again, fully established. The attempts which have been made by

cerning the flesh Christ *came*, "who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

n Jer. xxiii. 6; John i. 1; Acts xx. 28; Heb. i. 8;
1 John v. 20.

some to convert the last clause into an exclamation of praise, have signally failed. Such a construction of the words is at variance with their order in the original, and with the entire arrangement of the passage. The Apostle clearly distinguishes the human nature of our Lord, as to which he was of the seed of David, from that higher Nature which gives to His mysterious Person an ineffable dignity, so that we bow before Him in lowly adoration as our God, while we claim Him as our Brother, and rejoice in His human sympathy. To Him, as the Apostle reminds us, the loftiest ascriptions of praise are due from every creature, and that throughout eternity. But while the coming of Christ in the flesh, from among the race of Israel, crowned the distinctions conferred upon that people, it introduced a new state of things. When His work on earth was wrought out,—when, in particular, He had died as the sacrifice for sin, and risen again from the dead,—an economy far more comprehensive, and far richer in spiritual blessing, was established among men. The leading features of that economy the Apostle had already traced in this Epistle, more particularly in setting forth the method of gratuitous justification through faith, as applying equally to Jews and Gentiles. And now he goes on to show that, in establishing this economy, God was acting upon *principles* which had characterised His past dealings with mankind, and especially His dealings with the descendants of Abraham.

6. *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For †they are not all Israel, which are of Israel :

o Num. xxiii. 19 ; Rom. iii. 3. p John viii. 39 ; Rom. ii. 28, 29 ;
iv. 12, 16 ; Gal. vi. 16.

Verse 6. *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.* Here the Apostle enters upon his great argument. Alluding to the fact that, under the constitution now brought in, the Jewish nation, as such, had ceased to be the visible Church of God, and that Church consisted *only* of those, whether Jews or Gentiles, who came to the Lord Jesus for gratuitous justification, and then openly confessed His Name, —he first affirms that this involved no failure of the Divine promise. And the position which he takes to prove it is, that the *mere* circumstance of natural descent from Israel had never been sufficient to constitute any man, in the highest sense, one of God's *true Israel*, —one of His covenant and accepted people. This position no one who was conversant with the history of the Israelites, as recorded in their Sacred Books, could deny. It was unquestionable that many of those who came out of Egypt with Moses perished in the wilderness, and that some of them perished in connection with acts of idolatry and rebellion which allowed no ground to hope that they repented and found mercy. There must *always*, then, the Apostle intimates, have been *something more* required than lineal descent from their great ancestor, —something which should *connect* them, as *individuals*, with God's *promise of blessing*, so as to secure a personal interest in it.

Verse 7. *Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham,*

7. Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children : but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, *these are* not the children of God : but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

9. For this *is* the word of promise, 'At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

q Gal. iv. 23.

r Gen. xxi. 12 ; Heb. xi. 18.

s Gal. iv. 28.

t Gen. xviii. 10, 14.

are they all children : &c. In these words St. Paul confirms the general position which he had now assumed, by carrying back his argument to the case of Abraham. The dealings of God with that eminent patriarch showed most conclusively, that the mere circumstance of natural descent from him was not, *of itself*, sufficient to secure a special interest in the Divine favour and blessing,—was not sufficient to constitute any man one of God's covenant-people, and thus, in the highest sense, one of the "children" of Abraham. Had this been the case, Ishmael as well as Isaac would have been among the favoured race, and have enjoyed that intimate relation to God in which Abraham himself stood. But it was in the line of Isaac that the covenant-people was to arise, and the promises of God to be fulfilled.

Verses 8, 9. *That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God : but the children of the promise &c.* These verses bring out the deep *spiritual significance* of those arrangements of God with Abraham to which the Apostle had just alluded. Not only did the selection of Isaac to be the head of the chosen race, to the exclusion of Ishmael, show that the mere fact of natural

10. And not only *this*; but when *Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac;

11. (For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of *Him that calleth;)

u Gen. xxv. 21.

x Rom. iv. 17; viii. 28.

descent from Abraham was not that which influenced the Divine plans; but the circumstances under which Ishmael and Isaac were respectively born suggested a truth of deep interest, and which finds its perfect exemplification under the Christian economy. Ishmael was begotten by Abraham in the strength of nature; but Isaac, who was to stand as the type of all believers in every age, was brought into this world, not by virtue of the original strength of nature, but through a special intervention of Divine power vouchsafed in accordance with a distinct *promise* of God,—that promise being embraced by the faith both of Abraham and Sarah. Thus was afforded a beautiful intimation of the principle, that the true “children” of Abraham, those who should indeed be the “children of God,” should be born from above,—born through a gracious operation of the Spirit, to which no natural claim could be advanced, but which was given simply as a matter of “promise” and grace. This view of the cases of Ishmael and Isaac St. Paul gives us also in his Epistle to the Galatians (iii. 29; iv. 21—31).

Verses 10—13. *And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; &c.* The general principle which the Apostle had affirmed,—that the mere circumstance of natural affinity to Abraham had never been sufficient to constitute a person one of God’s

2. Therefore because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children. *Ans.* In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

3. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are numbered for the seed.

4. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

1 Gen. xv. 22.

2 Gen. xxi. 12: Heb. xi. 12.

3 Gal. iv. 28.

4 Gen. xviii. 14, 15.

are they all children: &c. In these words St. Paul confirms the general position which he had now assumed, by carrying back his argument to the case of Abraham. The dealings of God with that eminent patriarch showed most conclusively, that the mere circumstance of natural descent from him was not, of itself, sufficient to secure a special interest in the Divine favour and blessing,—was not sufficient to constitute any man one of God's covenant-people, and thus, in the highest sense, one of the “children” of Abraham. Had this been the case, Ishmael as well as Isaac would have been among the favoured race, and have enjoyed that intimate relation to God in which Abraham himself stood. But it was in the line of Isaac that the covenant-people was to arise, and the promises of God to be fulfilled.

Verses 8, 9. *That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise &c.* These verses bring out more fully the significance of those arrangements of the Divine will, which the Apostle had just mentioned, in the selection of Isaac to be the heir of the promise, and the exclusion of Ishmael.

12. It was said unto her, * The || elder shall serve the || younger.

13. As it is written, * Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

y Gen. xiv. 23. || Or, *greater*. || Or, *less*.

* See Deut. xxi. 15 ; Prov. xiii. 24 ; Mal. i. 2, 3 ; Matt. x. 37 ;
Luke xiv. 26 ; John xii. 25.

people,—is here illustrated and confirmed by another remarkable case ; and a *second* principle is brought out,—that God exercises *perfect freedom* in conferring His benefits, sacredly maintaining, however, as the Apostle afterwards intimates, the essential rectitude of His character and government. There was a selection made between the twin sons of Isaac ; and, even before their birth, the younger, to the exclusion of the elder, was chosen to be the ancestor of the more powerful nation, and the one in whose line the Messiah should appear. All the circumstances of this case contributed to render it instructive ; and St. Paul dwells on these circumstances as placing in a very striking light the principles for which he was contending. Unlike Ishmael and Isaac, the children in question were of one father and one mother ; they were *twins*, conceived at the same time, and one born almost immediately after the other ; and the selection of Jacob to be the head of the more favoured nation was made before they were born, and consequently before they had done good or evil. It is not necessary to dwell at length on the consideration, that the announcement made to Rebecca referred to *the descendants* of her sons. The express words of the Scriptural narrative clearly evince this :—“ And the Lord said unto her, Two *nations* are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels ; and the one people shall be

14. What shall we say then ? * *Is there unrighteousness with God ? God forbid.*

a Deut. xxxii. 4; 2 Chron. xix. 7; Job viii. 3; xxxiv. 10; Ps. xcii. 15.

stronger than the other people ; and the elder shall serve the younger." (Gen. xxv. 23.) So, too, the declaration of Malachi, quoted by St. Paul, refers to the *temporal lot* of the descendants of Jacob and Esau respectively. Nothing, in either of these Divine oracles, bore on the *eternal state* of the individuals alluded to or of their posterity ; but on arrangements of God affecting their relation to His outward Church,—their enjoyment of religious advantages,—and their possession of material blessings. In regard to such arrangements, the Apostle contends, God exercises *His own free and sovereign will*, and sometimes sees fit to dispense His favours in a manner which to us appears strange and startling. This principle had an obvious bearing on *the present constitution of the Church*, embracing, as it did, all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who sought justification through faith in Jesus, and then stood forth to confess Him, while it shut out the natural descendants of Abraham, and Isaac; and Jacob, who did *not* come to the Lord Jesus for acceptance and salvation. (Verses 30—33.) It was the exclusion of any portion of the race of Israel from the Church of God, to which St. Paul was anxious to reconcile the minds of his Jewish brethren ; and he shows them, that such an arrangement was only analogous to other procedures of God, and was in accordance with the principles which had influenced His dealings with their great ancestors.

Verse 14. *What shall we say then ? Is there unrighteousness with God ? God forbid.* Here the Apostle adverts to an objection which might suggest itself to some minds, on considering the principle which he had just affirmed. He

15. For he saith to Moses, ^bI will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

^b Exod. xxxiii. 19.

had contended that God exercises His sovereign freedom in conferring His benefits ; but then he equally held, that all the decisions and arrangements of God are in accordance with the perfect rectitude of His Nature,—that His *righteousness*, as the Moral Governor of the universe, is unimpeachable, and will, at the last, be gloriously displayed. “What shall we say then?” he asks, “Is there unrighteousness with God?” and he answers with characteristic earnestness and decision, “God forbid,” or “Let it not be,”—let not such a thought be allowed for a moment. He felt, as every devout mind must feel, that God *cannot*, in anything that He does, violate the principles of rectitude. *This he lays down as a settled point.* He treats it as certain and unquestionable ; and he goes on to show that, notwithstanding this, God yet exercises His freedom both in the bestowment of special favours, and in the application of the great principles of His government to individual men. For this purpose he cites two cases from the ancient Scriptures.

Verse 15. *For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, &c.* The declaration here referred to is found in Exod. xxxiii. 19. Moses, by his earnest intercessions, had obtained from Jehovah the assurance, that, notwithstanding the past unfaithfulness of the Israelites, His “presence” should go with them, and that He would “give them rest.” Encouraged by this proof of the grace and condescension of God, Moses further prayed, “I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.” And the answer of God was, “I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will

16. So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.

proclaim the Name of the LORD before thee ; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Two things, we conceive, were implied in the concluding words, which the Apostle here cites : first, that it belongs to God *to fix His own terms of mercy*, on which He will proceed in the government of mankind ; and, secondly, that it belongs to Him, also, to confer *special favours on individuals*, like the privilege now about to be vouchsafed to Moses, in answer to his earnest prayer.

Verse 16. *So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.* These words form the Apostle's inference from the declaration of God to Moses, and bring out very clearly and strongly one grand feature of the Christian economy. They, in effect, affirm, that the enjoyment of God's favour by any man is not to be ascribed to any works performed by him in the strength of his own will, or indeed to any efforts whatever that he may put forth ;—"it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth ;"—but it is to be attributed to the "mercy" of God, which holds forth to man that inestimable blessing, and dispenses it in a way which shall show that it is all of grace. This principle finds its best illustration, and its most impressive development, in that plan of justification through faith alone with which the Apostle winds up his reasonings in this chapter. By that plan all merit is shut out from man ; not only merit which he might be disposed to claim on account of his own supposed obedience to the law, but also any secondary merit which might seem to attach to his repentance or his faith. The glory of our

17. For 'the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, 'Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My Name might be declared throughout all the earth.

c See Gal. iii. 8, 22. d Exod. ix. 16.

salvation is to be wholly ascribed to "God that showeth mercy."

Verse 17. *For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose &c.* This is the second case which the Apostle brings forward to show that God exercises His sovereign freedom in the application of the principles of His government to individual men, while yet all the acts of that government are characterised by perfect rectitude. He cites the remarkable declaration of God to Pharaoh, recorded in Exod. ix. 16, and dwells on it as suggesting the truth, that even impenitent and hardened sinners, on whom, according to His general procedures, the stroke of judgment might be expected to fall, are sometimes permitted to continue in positions of influence, that His power may be more signally manifested, and His glorious perfections more widely acknowledged. It must not be imagined, that the phrase, "I have raised thee up," is equivalent to "I have brought thee into existence." When we turn to the original passage in Exodus, we find the proper import of the Hebrew term accurately given in the margin, "*And in very deed for this cause have I made thee stand;*" and the sentiment suggested is, that whereas Pharaoh had, again and again, deserved to be cut down for his repeated and haughty disobedience, yet God had "made him stand," for purposes connected with the more impressive manifestation of His own glory. The rendering of the Septuagint Version accords with this view; and the term which St.

18. Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.

Paul uses is perfectly consistent with it. The compound word, ἐξεγείρω, refers, not to the bringing of a person into existence, but rather to the raising up of a person from death or from deep depression; so that the sentiment is, that Pharaoh's justly-forfeited life had been spared,—had been, as it were, *given back* to him,—that in his case there might be a more glorious display of Jehovah's power, which should convince all men that He can, with perfect ease, overthrow all His enemies, and frustrate their proudest designs. This exposition is confirmed by the Apostle's argument in verse 22, in which he alludes to the case of Pharaoh as one which had become spiritually hopeless and ripe for judgment, but in which longsuffering was continued, beyond God's usual method of procedure, for purposes connected with the manifestation of His own power and glory.

Verse 18. *Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.* Here the Apostle states the general principle which the two cases adduced so strikingly illustrated. He affirms that God, without any infringement of His essential rectitude, exercises His free and sovereign will in bestowing special favours on individual men, as well as in fixing His own terms of mercy; and that He exercises the same freedom as to the time and mode of visiting with His signal judgments the impenitent and obstinate,—sometimes permitting the circumstances which occur around them to have a hardening effect upon them, when they themselves have long since hardened their own hearts against His truth and grace. St. Paul had already repelled, with earnest indignation, the insinuation that there is unrighteousness with God. He held it as a

19. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For 'who hath resisted His will?

ε 2 Chron. xx. 6; Job ix. 12; xxiii. 13; Dan. iv. 35.

settled principle, even as he had affirmed, most emphatically, in the second chapter of this Epistle, that all the *judicial decisions* of God will be characterised by the strictest *impartiality*; but still he saw, as every man must see, that this leaves a wide scope for the exercise of His freedom and sovereignty in His dealings with men. It is His to appoint the terms of mercy and salvation for all: it is His also to bestow on individuals peculiar advantages which He requires them to improve for His glory. So, too, when evil principles are fixed and settled, when men have resisted His grace, and stand forth in bold and presumptuous hostility to Him, He may, if he sees fit, preserve such persons in a position of influence and power, and may even order the course of events so as to bring out their unyielding wickedness into stronger manifestation, that the power of His own arm, and the triumphs of His own righteousness, may be more signal. But this is a very different thing from personal reprobation from eternity: this does not take away from any man the blame of his own final ruin. Pharaoh's heart was already firmly set against the Israelites, to grind them down with cruel oppression, before this declaration of God was addressed to him; he had already attained maturity in wickedness, and might justly have been cut down: but God "made him to stand,"—"raised him up," so to speak, when his life was justly forfeited,—and allowed the whole series of His judgments to have a hardening effect upon his spirit.

Verse 19. *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?* This objection the

20. Nay but, O man, who art thou that || repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

|| Or, *answerest again*; or, *disputest with God*? Job xxxiii. 13.

f Isa. xxix. 16; xlv. 9; lxiv. 8.

Apostle supposes some bold and impetuous mind to urge, as a legitimate inference from the principles just affirmed. But, however plausible it may, at first sight, appear, it cannot be sustained. It demands how, upon the principles laid down, God can justly "find fault" with any man, or visit him as a sinner? But, surely, there is nothing in that freedom of action on the part of God which the Apostle had asserted, that can interfere with His judicial procedures. And the consideration which the objector urges, "For who hath resisted His will?" is utterly insufficient to sustain the position which he assumes. The argument involves, indeed, an obvious fallacy. In one sense, no one can successfully resist the will of God. He reigns *supreme over all*; and His determinations, both as to the bestowment of blessing on His people, and the infliction of judgment on His adversaries, none can *overrule*. But there is, nevertheless, a resistance to the will of God, in the sense of *resistance to His authority and government*, of which the sinner is guilty, and which, especially if persisted in and become inveterate, constitutes him "a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction." Such a man may well be arraigned by God as a transgressor; though He may exercise His sovereignty as to the time and circumstances of His judicial inflictions, and though He may even order the arrangements of His government, so that this obstinate offender shall stand yet more stiffly in the attitude of disobedience and hostility.

Verses 20, 21. *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say &c. The*

21. Hath not the *potter* power over the clay, of the same lump to make *one* vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

22. *What* if God, willing to show *His* wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering *the* vessels of wrath *||* *k* fitted to destruction:

g Prov. xvi. 4; Jer. xviii. 6. *h* 2 Tim. ii. 20.

i 1 Thess. v. 9. *||* Or, *made up*. *k* 1 Peter ii. 8; Jude 4.

Apostle's *answer* to the objection just alleged is contained in verses 22—24: but, before giving that reply, he reproves the bold and presumptuous spirit which dictated it. He reminds the objector of the disparity between man and God, —the feeble, dependent creature, indebted even for existence to a higher Power, and clearly at the disposal of that Power as to the circumstances in which he shall be placed, and the Almighty Creator, the Universal Lord. It is not for man, St. Paul affirms, to dispute with God, and to call in question either His right to judge mankind, on the one hand, or, on the other, His right to dispense favours to individuals in differing measures, and to fix, according to His own wisdom, and not according to man's views of propriety, His terms of mercy. There is an allusion in the reasoning of the Apostle to several passages of the Old Testament, and in particular to Isaiah xlv. 9, Jeremiah xviii. 1—10.

Verse 22. *What if God, willing to show His wrath, &c.* Here the Apostle replies to the question of the objector, whose boldness and arrogance he had just rebuked. 'What inconsistency,' he asks, in effect, 'is there between the judicial arraignment of an obstinate sinner by God, when He sees fit to call him to account, and the exercise of longsuffering towards that sinner, even when his case has become a hopeless one, and the only effect of that longsuffering will be, to bring out his rebellion into more striking forms, and

23. And that He might make known 'the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory,

l Rom. ii. 4; Ephes. i. 7; Col. i. 27. m Rom. viii. 28, 29, 30.

to give occasion ultimately for a brighter display of the power and justice of Jehovah? Surely God has the right, if He sees fit to do so, to *delay* the visitation of judgment, in order to accomplish important purposes connected with His government, and to afford a more impressive display of His perfections.' The words "vessels of wrath *fitted to destruction*" indicate a *matured* state of wickedness, one in which the sinner is ripe for judgment. Bengel has properly called attention to the difference in the phraseology of this and the next verse. He remarks that the Apostle here uses the passive participle "*fitted*," while in the next verse, speaking of "the vessels of mercy," he recognises the direct agency of God,—"*which He had afore prepared unto glory*." His observation upon this verse is very appropriate, that the word employed "denotes the disposition or fitness, not the destination;" that "what is said merely refers to *the state* in which God finds the reprobate, when He brings upon them His wrath."—It is scarcely necessary to add, that the purpose to which the Apostle refers in this verse is *not* the *usual* design of the Divine longsuffering. That design the Apostle himself has stated, with clearness and force, in ii. 4—6. It is only in some exempt cases of confirmed resistance to God, that judgment is delayed with a view to permit the impiety of men to stand out in bolder relief, that ultimately the displeasure of God against sin, and the impotence of all earthly power when opposed to Him, may be more clearly evinced.

Verse 23. *And that He might make known the riches of*

24. Even us, whom He hath called, * not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles ?

* Rom. iii. 29.

His glory &c. The Apostle now passes to the other feature of the Divine proceedings, against which the objection to which he is replying was alleged. In the exercise of His freedom and sovereignty God has established an economy of "mercy," rich in its provisions of blessing, and affording an impressive display of His glorious perfections, both in the offer of gratuitous salvation, and in the fulness of privilege to which all who embrace that offer are raised. That economy is especially distinguished by a gracious operation of God Himself upon the mind, "preparing" it for the deep and holy joys of the heavenly state, and for the "glory" which is to encircle for ever the entire nature of Christ's people. In the establishment of such an economy, the Apostle, in effect, argues, there is nothing that should preclude the exercise, on the part of God, of judicial action,—nothing that should prevent Him from summoning to an account the careless and rebellious. His grace may flow forth to men in the forms which He Himself shall design, and under the circumstances which He shall appoint, and yet the rectitude of His judicial decisions be unimpaired.

Verse 24. *Even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles ?* In these words St. Paul applies his preceding reasonings to the case which he had in view,—the constitution of the Church under the Christian economy. The arrangement that Jews and Gentiles who, following the gracious influences of the Spirit, gratefully accepted the overtures of mercy in Christ, should stand together in that Church, as equal partakers of the abounding riches of Divine grace, was only in accordance

25. As He saith also in Osee, ° I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.

26. ¢ And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, Ye *are* not My people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

° Hosea ii. 23; 1 Peter ii. 10. ¢ Hosea i. 10.

with that sovereignty which had ever marked the Divine procedures. The exclusion from the privileges of the Church of many of the race of Israel—of all, indeed, who refused to accept the method of gratuitous justification through faith in the Crucified Redeemer (verses 31—33)—was analogous to other procedures of God in the history of their ancestors; while the admission of the Gentiles who believed in Jesus to the full privileges of His people was another illustration of His right to arrange the provisions of the scheme of grace, and to confer its peculiar advantages, according to His own will, sacredly guarding, however, the inviolable rectitude of His judicial decisions.

Verses 25, 26. *As He saith also in Osee, I will call them My people, &c.* The Apostle now proceeds to show, by quotations from the ancient Scriptures, that such a constitution of the Church as God has established under the Christian economy had been shadowed forth in the prophetic writings. The passages from Hosea which he first adduces bear on the admission of those who were not the people of God to a special and endeared relation to Himself; and were thus applicable, *in principle*, to the admission of the Gentiles to the Church of God, although in their primary use they referred to the restoration of the unfaith-

27. *Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, ' a remnant shall be saved :*

q Isa. x. 22, 23.

r Rom. xi. 5.

ful and disowned Israelites of the northern kingdom to the position which they had forfeited. (See Hosea i. 10 ; ii. 23.) The Gentiles, as such, had stood, for many ages, outside the house of God, though once, in common with the race of Israel, they had been partakers of its blessings. This the Saviour Himself had clearly intimated in His parable of the prodigal son, which, among other things, carried back thoughtful minds to the period when there was no distinction of Jew and Gentile, but when the light and privileges of the patriarchal faith were common to all mankind. The admission of the Gentiles, then, upon their believing in Jesus, to all the blessings of a church-relation to God, might well be shadowed forth by those declarations which, in the first instance, referred to the restoration of fallen Israelites to the position of God's people. *The principle was the same in both cases ;* but in that of the Gentiles it was illustrated on a far larger scale, and in a far more glorious and impressive manner.

Verses 27, 28. *Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number &c.* In these verses St. Paul cites a passage from the prophet Isaiah which intimated that, while many of the race of Israel should be rejected, yet there would ever be a pious remnant, who should stand in the full privileges of the people of God. The passage referred to is Isaiah x. 22, 23 ; and the sentiment which it conveys is well brought out by Dr. Patrick Fairbairn, while the words given by the Apostle are shown to express the

28. For He will finish || the work, and cut it short in righteousness: 'because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.

|| Or, *the account.* *Isa. xxviii. 22.*

general meaning of the prophet,—for in this case, as in so many others, the inspired writers of the New Testament quote so as to *explain* the declarations of the earlier revelation:—"The citation approaches pretty nearly to the Septuagint, yet does not exactly accord with it; nor does it, in the latter part, give more than the general sense of the Hebrew. The first part is a close rendering: 'If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea,' (referring to the promise to Abraham,) 'the remnant' (viz., that mentioned in the verse immediately preceding, 'the remnant shall return unto the mighty God'—this, but only this, not the countless, sand-like multitude) 'shall return.' Then the reason follows; which in the original runs, 'For the Lord God of Hosts is making a consumption, and' (or 'even') 'determined, in the midst of all the earth.' The sentence is obscure; and a paraphrastic rendering is given of it by the Apostle. It evidently points to a work of judgment, which the Lord was going to execute generally in the earth, and from which the covenant-people were by no means to escape. Even in respect to them, He was not going always to forbear; and, while He saved a remnant, He would, at the same time, accomplish a work of judgment upon the many. This also is what is expressed by the Apostle, and more distinctly. The Lord was going, according to it, to bring His word to an issue—an abrupt and determinate issue—that would signally display His righteousness; implying, of course, from the connection, that Israel was to share in the severity of its inflictions.

29. And as Esaias said before, 'Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, *we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

30. What shall we say then ? *That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, †even the righteousness which is of faith.

† Isa. i. 9; Lam. iii. 22. † Isa. xiii. 19; Jer. i. 40.

‡ Rom. iv. 11; x. 20. § Rom. i. 17.

So that this does not differ, in sense, from the 'consumption determined,' which the literal rendering yields." (*Hermeneutical Manual*, pp. 389, 390.)

Verse 29. *And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, &c.* Here another and earlier declaration of Isaiah is introduced, the passage referred to being i. 9. It showed that, even in the midst of abounding corruption, and when the severest visitations of judgment came down upon the mass of the people, there would be left a remnant,—though that remnant might be only as a seed for fresh planting.

Verses 30, 31. *What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, &c.* These and the following verses present to us *the conclusion of the whole argument.* They set forth, in clear and definite language, the great truth which all the preceding reasonings were designed to introduce,—the truth to which St. Paul was anxious to reconcile the minds of his Jewish brethren, that he might lead them to the Lord Jesus in penitent faith, so that they might still enjoy the privileges of God's house. In accordance with the intimations of prophecy, many who were formerly not the people of God had become His people, having attained to the "righteousness" which is

31. But Israel, "which followed after the law of righteousness, "hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

32. Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For ^bthey stumbled at that stumblingstone;

^s Rom. x. 2; xi. 7.

^a Gal. v. 4.

^b Luke ii. 34; 1 Cor. i. 23.

through the faith of Jesus, though at one period they had no spiritual aspirations; and, on the other hand, many who gloried in the law, and sought justification in its works and observances, had failed of "righteousness," and had ceased to belong to the Church of God. For now Almighty God, in the exercise of His wise and righteous will,—in the exercise, too, of His perfect freedom in fixing the terms of mercy and dispensing the blessings of His grace,—has established *one* covenant of salvation, the simple condition of which, to Jews and Gentiles alike, is *trust in the atonement of Jesus*, combined, as this will ever be, with *the surrender of ourselves to Him*. This is the constitution of grace which the Apostle had so fully unfolded in the former part of the Epistle, and the rich and ample blessings of which he had so distinctly traced. This constitution, evidently, threw open the door of salvation to the whole race of Israel, though so many refused to enter it.

Verses 32, 33. *Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled &c.* Here, in plain and forcible terms, St. Paul shows why the great majority of the Jewish people failed of righteousness, and were shut out from the Church of God. They trusted to their own observance of the law, both in its moral precepts and its outward rites, for justification, instead of coming, in utter self-renunciation, to Him

33. As it is written, 'Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence : and ^dwhosoever believeth on Him shall not be || ashamed.

c Ps. cxviii. 22 ; Isa. viii. 14 ; xxviii. 16 ; Matt. xxi. 42 ;

1 Peter ii. 6, 7, 8. d Rom. x. 11. || Or, *confounded*.

who is the one Propitiation for sin, the one Refuge of the guilty. To them the sure foundation-stone which God had laid in Sion proved "a stone of stumbling and rock of offence." They were not prepared to abandon all claim of personal merit, and rely exclusively on the righteousness and sacrifice of Another ; they turned away from the cross of Jesus, as not fulfilling their cherished hopes of the Messiah's glory ; and they were offended that they, as a people, were to have no pre-eminence, under the Christian economy, over the Gentiles, and that these last were invited to become the people of God, through faith in the Lord Jesus, without submitting to circumcision and binding themselves to observe the law. Two passages of Isaiah are *combined* by the Apostle in his citation,—viii. 14 and xxviii. 16. Both these were regarded by the Jews themselves as referring to the Messiah ; and there was no inconsistency in blending them so as to *bring together* the views which they suggested of the great Restorer and the way of salvation through Him. Beautiful and most appropriate is the concluding declaration, taken from the second of these passages. If to some the Lord Jesus is "a stone of stumbling," to all who receive Him by faith He is an unfailing Source of security and peace. No trepidation shall fill the heart of the believer, when danger threatens, or when death itself approaches : no confusion shall overwhelm him, either amidst the changes of earth, or when the realities of eternity open to his view.

CHAPTER X.

1. BRETHREN, my heart's desire and prayer to God

CHAPTER X.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

ST. PAUL had now shown, that the arrangements of the Christian economy harmonise with the principles upon which God had ever proceeded, and that they involve no injustice to the race of Israel, to whom, equally with the Gentiles, the way of justification is opened through faith in the Lord Jesus. But this theme awakened so deep an interest in his mind, that he lingers on it, both that he might more impressively set forth the excellence of the evangelical method of salvation, and that he might induce some of his Jewish brethren to accept its provisions.

He again affirms his earnest solicitude for the conversion of Israel to the faith of Christ, and his repeated prayers for that blessed result. He acknowledges the strong religious feeling by which they were distinguished; but contends that it took a wrong direction, and that by endeavouring to establish a righteousness of their own, instead of humbly embracing the Divine scheme of grace, they had failed of righteousness, and exposed themselves to everlasting rejection. He then beautifully contrasts *the righteousness of the law* with *the righteousness of faith*; and shows that, while the former is now impossible, the latter is brought near to us, since all the Divine provisions for our justification are complete, and the facts on which that justification rests are actually accomplished.

And now he marks another feature of the Christian

for Israel is, that they might be saved.

economy,—that the offers of mercy, which thus place Jew and Gentile on the same ground, are to be *openly proclaimed* to men of *all nations*, and that the ambassadors of the Lord Jesus are to go forth, in every direction, with His message of peace. He expresses his joy at the extent to which that message had been already made known; while he declares his regret that many, to whom the Christian salvation had been offered, had not embraced it. All this, however, he contends, had been set forth in the intimations of prophecy; and he reminds his brethren of the race of Israel, that their Sacred Writings had expressly declared both the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of those among themselves who should refuse to accept the Divine scheme of blessing, and should thus cast off the authority of Jehovah.

Verse 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* This language beautifully and forcibly expresses the constant and earnest desire of St. Paul for the salvation of Israel. He addresses the whole Church at Rome in the affectionate word “brethren,” including those whose prejudices may have been called forth against him; and he protests that, so far from looking with complacency, or even with cold indifference, on the separation of so many of the race of Israel from the Lord Jesus, their *salvation* was an object *very dear* to his heart, one which would call forth in his breast a holy *satisfaction*, and for which his prayers continually ascended to Almighty God. Nothing that he had said, in his preceding reasonings, implied that they were shut out from the Divine mercy; and the Christian economy, while it

2. For I bear them record, "that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

3. For they being ignorant of ^bGod's righteousness, and going about to establish their own 'righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

^a Acts xxi. 20; xxii. 3; Gal. i. 14; iv. 17; see ch. ix. 31.

^b Rom. i. 17; ix. 30. ^c Phil. iii. 9.

welcomed believing Gentiles to every spiritual privilege, offered its blessings equally to the Jewish people, and indeed addressed to them, in the first instance, its overtures of peace.

Verse 2. *For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, &c.* In addition to the other considerations which caused the Apostle to linger with affectionate solicitude on the spiritual state of the people of Israel,—to some of which he had referred in the opening of the preceding chapter,—he now mentions that they were possessed of *strong religious feeling*, though that feeling took a wrong direction, and thus led them far astray. It was not that their hearts were cold towards God, indifferent to His friendship, or proudly regardless of His authority. They had even "a zeal of God;" they wished to approve themselves to Him; but they did not take the course which God Himself had indicated, and thus failed of the peace and blessedness which they sought.

Verse 3. *For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about &c.* This was the great and fatal error of the majority of the Jewish people, and that which vitiated all their religious earnestness. They *neglected, or refused, to recognise* the righteousness which God offers to man, through faith in the Lord Jesus, and sought rather to

4. For *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

d Matt. v. 17; Gal. iii. 24.

establish a righteousness of their own, on the ground of obedience to the law, both in its moral precepts and its ceremonial requirements. Thus they placed themselves in *antagonism* to the Divine scheme of grace, and cut themselves off from its inestimable blessings. To induce them to abandon this false position, and to win them to submission to God, was the object of St. Paul's most intense solicitude.

Verse 4. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* This is one of those comprehensive sayings which are both replete with truth, and calculated to fix themselves indelibly in the memory. The precise sense in which the phrase, "the *end* of the law," is employed, has been matter of considerable dispute. Some regard the statement of the Apostle as being, in effect, that the work of Christ, involving as it did a perfect fulfilment of the law, has now set it aside, and *brought it*, as it were, *to an end*, considered as *the ground of justification*. Others regard the word "end" as indicating *the object to which a thing is intended to lead*, and in which it finds its designed result. To us the latter view appears preferable. And the course of thought which is thus suggested is the following. The law, of itself, cannot justify. Excellent and holy as it is, it cannot conduct man to righteousness, or confer upon him eternal life. But it may, when applied by the Holy Spirit, *conduct him to Christ*. He is the Object to which its discoveries of duty, and its consequent disclosure of our sinfulness and ruin, should lead us onward, that we may attain righteousness and life in Him. **A**

5. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, 'That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

e Lev. xviii. 5; Neh. ix. 29; Ezek. xx. 11, 13, 21; Gal. iii. 12.

similar sentiment is found in Gal. iii. 24, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Regarded in this light, the statement of St. Paul impressively marks the truth, that Christ, and Christ alone, is the *ground* of our acceptance. Faith is not that ground, but only the principle by which we are brought into such a relation to the Lord Jesus, that the whole benefit of His mediatorial work accrues to us. The office of faith is, to appropriate His sacrifice, and thus to unite us to Him: but it is Christ who "is made unto us righteousness," in accordance with that gracious constitution which the Eternal Father has established.

Verse 5. *For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth &c.* The Apostle now proceeds to draw a striking contrast between the righteousness which is of the law, and that which is through the faith of Christ. The principle of the former he illustrates by a few comprehensive words from the book of Leviticus. In introducing one series of laws, Moses was commissioned to address to the Israelites the solemn charge of Jehovah, "Ye shall keep My statutes and My judgments, *which if a man do, he shall live in them.* I am the Lord." These words the Apostle selects as expressing, simply and clearly, the ground on which a man who hopes to be justified by the law must rest his claim. He must be prepared to maintain, that he has obeyed all God's precepts,—that he has fulfilled, uniformly and perfectly, all His requirements: But this

6. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, *f* Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above* :)

f Dent. xxx. 12, 13.

is a ground which no man can consistently take; and thus the righteousness which is of the law is *unattainable* by any human being.

Verse 6. *But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, &c.* In this and the following verses St. Paul dwells, with holy exultation, on the excellence of the Divine scheme of justification through faith, and its perfect adaptation to the circumstances of mankind. Unlike the righteousness of the law, which is now impossible to man, "the righteousness which is of faith" is *at hand*,—it rests upon *facts* which are *already accomplished*,—and it is a *simple provision* of which the contrite sinner may *even now* avail himself. In setting forth these views, St. Paul borrows the language of a remarkable passage of Deuteronomy (xxx. 11—14). He does not, indeed, give the words of Moses as a formal quotation; nor does he intimate that they were uttered with an ulterior reference to the subject to which he applies them. He does not speak of this portion of the ancient Scriptures as *fulfilled* in the present arrangements of God, nor does he adduce it in *proof* of the sentiments which he is enforcing. A reference to the passage will show, that it was originally employed by Moses in relation to the law which he had given to the Israelites from God, and the great principles of which he had just repeated and confirmed. But the Apostle so loved the ancient Scriptures,—their phraseology, endeared to him both by early association and by repeated

7. Or, Who shall descend into the deep ? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

study, so readily and naturally occurred to his mind,—that he preferred to exhibit the truths which he had in view in language suggested by them, though that language was primarily used in reference to a very different subject. He transfers, then, in substance, the declarations of Moses relative to the law so distinctly placed before the people of Israel, to the *provisions of redemption* and the offer of mercy in Christ. He represents the righteousness which is of faith as addressing us in the words, "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven ?" and then he adds the explanatory comment, "that is, to bring Christ down from above." Now the point of these words clearly is, that *this has already been done*. Christ *has come* into this world. The stupendous fact of the *Incarnation* has taken place ; and we can now gaze upon the Eternal Son manifested in our nature, trace His earthly history, mark the perfect character of His obedience to the Father, until we behold Him expire upon the cross as the Sacrifice for human guilt.

Verse 7. *Or, Who shall descend into the deep ? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)* Still the righteousness which is of faith is represented as addressing us, and pointing us to the *completeness* of the provisions of redemption, and the *actual accomplishment* of all the facts which are essential to our justification. The Lord Jesus *has risen from the dead*. We have not now to stand at the sepulchre in which His sacred body was deposited in its lifeless state, and to think of His human spirit as still left in hades. He has come forth from the tomb ; and in this very fact we have the Father's attestation to the sufficiency and the

8. But what saith it ? *⁹* The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth and in thy heart : that is, the word of faith, which we preach ;

9. That *ⁱ* if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the

g Deut. xxx. 14. *h* Matt. x. 32 ; Luke xii. 8 ; Acts viii. 37.

acceptance of His sacrifice. The economy of redemption, then, is now complete. Nothing more remains to be done in order to afford a firm and enduring ground for our justification. The way of life is open ; and a *present* salvation is brought within our reach.

Verse 8. *But what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, &c.* These words of Moses are most appropriately transferred to the righteousness which is of faith. To every man who is willing to forsake the path of sin and to confess the Saviour, while with his heart he relies on His accomplished and accepted sacrifice, righteousness and life are brought near. The Christian message—"the word of faith"—does not set before us an impossibility ; it does not bid us do some great thing in order to be accepted of God ; it does not merely encourage us to hope that at some distant interval we shall be accepted ; it does not bid us go through a long process of ceremonial observances and sorrowful waiting. It tells us, on the contrary, of a gratuitous salvation, to be realised *even now* through faith in the Redeemer, the confession of whose Name is thenceforward to become our duty, our privilege, and our joy, until our salvation itself is consummated by our admission to His presence, and the perfect conformity of our entire nature to His glory. This the Apostle immediately sets forth.

Verse 9. *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart &c.* In this method of exhibiting the plan of salvation, St. Paul seems

Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10. For with the heart man believeth unto right-

to have kept in view the order of the words of Moses, which he had just represented the righteousness of faith as addressing to us:—"The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy *mouth*, and in thy *heart*." In the next verse he reverses the order, and speaks first of faith and its relation to justification, and then of the confession of Christ leading on to our complete and perfect salvation. It is instructive to mark the *variety* which characterises the inspired methods of presenting the same great truths. St. Paul here speaks of justifying faith as he had done in iv. 24, 25. The *direct* and *immediate* object of that faith is the *sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus*: but, while this is ever kept in view, His *resurrection* is sometimes brought into special prominence, as the Father's public and solemn declaration of the sufficiency of His atonement. For it should never be overlooked, that the Saviour offered up Himself in fulfilment of the Father's counsel, and an enlightened faith appropriates His death as the *Divine* and *accepted provision* for man's salvation. If Jesus is indeed the Risen One, we may well commit our souls into His hands. "God hath raised Him from the dead;" and as we look upon Him, no longer oppressed with sorrow, or weighed down with distressing apprehensions, we see the proof that all the penal suffering which was to come upon Him as our Representative and Substitute has been actually endured, and that all who receive Him shall be accounted righteous, and gain a title to eternal life.

Verse 10. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth &c.* It is important to mark the

eousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11. For the Scripture saith, ' Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.

† Isa. xxviii. 16; xlix. 23; Jer. xvii. 7; Rom. ix. 33.

distinct and emphatic manner in which St. Paul here represents justifying faith as *the trust of the heart*. His words shut out the idea, that a cold intellectual assent to the facts of Christianity, and the doctrines interwoven with them, will suffice for our salvation. The heart must turn to Christ, to rest on Him and Him alone. Such a faith, the Apostle had maintained throughout this Epistle, is the means of our attaining the righteousness which is offered to us through Christ. It stands directly connected with our justification, and introduces us to all the privileges and hopes of the people of God. But with this faith, if we would at last triumph in Christ, there must ever be combined *the open confession of His Name*. As we come to Him, in the first instance, to commit our souls into His hands, we must be ready to avow that *He* is the *only* Object of our trust; and when we are accepted in Him, we must stand forth as His people, and, though men may treat Him with neglect, and laugh at all pretensions to a participation of His Spirit, we must acknowledge Him as our Lord, our Refuge, and our Life. He Himself demands this in language the most solemn and emphatic; (Matt. x. 32, 33;) and we cannot hope to be at last welcomed by Him as His own, if we have refused to confess Him before a frivolous or a hostile world.

Verse 11. *For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.* St. Paul seems here to refer to Isaiah xxviii. 16, though the sentiment in question is brought

13. For "whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved.

n Joel ii. 32; Acts ii. 21. o Acts ix. 14.

the Greek,"—since all are placed under an economy of grace which offers to them, on the same simple condition of faith, the fulness of spiritual blessing. He glances at the relation in which God stands to the whole human family,—that He is the "Lord over all," rightfully claiming dominion over every human being, and comprehending all in the benefits of His administration. We naturally recall here the exulting appeal found in iii. 29, 30, "Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith."—And the Apostle further suggests the *abundance* of the Divine mercy. It is not a partial or grudging communication of spiritual good to which the Gentiles are invited; but "the same Lord over all is *rich* unto all that call upon Him." He delights over them, to impart to them the fulness of His peace, and to reveal in their experience the exhaustless treasures of His love.

Verse 13. *For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved.* Again St. Paul confirms the truth which he was enforcing by an appeal to the ancient Scriptures. The words which he cites are taken from the great evangelical promise uttered by Joel, chapter ii., and adduced by the Apostle Peter in his address to the Jews and proselytes assembled at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. That promise announced the rich effusion of the Spirit, "in the last days," on all ranks of men, and the establishment of a dispensation which was to prepare the way for the final manifestation of the Lord in glory: but

14. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

p Titus i. 3.

it comprehended, also, the gracious assurance, that "who-soever should call on the Name of the Lord should be saved." The term "the Lord" must here be referred to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Father has set forth as the Hope and Refuge of mankind; so that, in embracing Him, we accept the Father's counsel. And the expression, "to call on the Name of the Lord," thus understood, is remarkably comprehensive and forcible. While it includes the *first* reception of the Lord Jesus, as the ground of our acceptance, it marks also the *habitual* turning of the soul to Him for every spiritual blessing. And it suggests to us both the glories which centre in His character, and His infinite sufficiency as the Mediator. We are to "call upon His Name," recognising His Divine perfections, and recognising also the position which He holds as the exalted Mediator, whose atonement has been accepted, and who now reigns to bestow every blessing on all who come to Him.

Verse 14. *How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe &c.* Here the Apostle introduces another feature of the Christian economy, and one that necessarily resulted from the comprehensive character of the scheme of grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. That feature is, that now the messengers of Christ are commissioned to go forth to all nations to publish the free and universal offer of mercy. The Jewish dispensation was *conservative* rather than *diffusive*. The tabernacle, and

15. And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet

q Isa. liii. 7; Nahum i. 15.

afterwards the temple, stood in solemn grandeur, inviting strangers to come and worship Jehovah; and men of other lands were even allowed, upon submitting to circumcision, and engaging to observe the law, to be incorporated with the race of Israel; but no preachers went forth to the nations generally, to tell them of blessing and salvation. But this is the glory of Christianity; and the Apostle argues that such an arrangement was essential to the carrying out of the Divine purpose, that "whosoever," of any nation, "should call on the Name of the Lord should be saved." Keeping in view the wide reference of this expression as implying a continual looking to the Lord Jesus, and the habitual committing of the soul into His hands, he argues that, in order to this, men must be brought to believe in Him;—that, to produce such a belief, the Christian message must be declared to them;—and that "preachers" must consequently go forth to announce that message, and press it on the attention of mankind. In the following verse, St. Paul completes this train of thought, and confirms his positions by a reference to the prophetic Scriptures.

Verse 15. *And how shall they preach, except they be sent?* The primary reference of the word "sent," in this question, is not to the sending forth and sustenance of Christ's ambassadors by Churches already gathered, but to men being *sent by Christ*,—*commissioned* by Him, even as Paul himself was,—to make known His gospel, and bring men to "the obedience of faith." Thus to send forth men, as His ambassadors to the nations, is the high prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; but the very fact, that He does

of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

lay His hand on some of His servants, and commission them to this work, involves a corresponding duty on the part of His people. His Churches are *bound*—solemnly bound to *Him*—not to hold back, by the failure to supply the necessary means, any one whom He has really called to preach His gospel to the heathen. Guilt must rest somewhere, if every one whom Christ has commissioned is not actually sent forth.

As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, &c. The Apostle evidently dwelt with holy satisfaction on the arrangement, that, under the gospel, the messengers of the Lord Jesus are to go forth to all nations; and his mind naturally turned to the beautiful intimations of this arrangement which had been given in the prophetic writings. The passage which he cites from Isaiah referred, in the first instance, to the deliverance of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity; but that deliverance was a type of one still greater under the coming Redeemer; and the *highest* and *ultimate* reference of the prediction was, doubtless, to the wide and general announcement of the Christian message, offering to men “peace” with God, together with the fulness of spiritual “good.” The heralds of Jehovah were to proclaim to Zion, “Thy God reigneth:” and, however applicable this declaration was to the signal manifestation of the Divine sovereignty in the rescue of Israel from captivity, it was still more applicable to that economy under which “the kingdom of God” is established among men, and all are invited to enjoy its immunities and engage in its holy services.

Verse 16. *But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For*

16. But ^rthey have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith, 'Lord, who hath believed *our ||report?

17. So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

^r Rom. iii. 8; Heb. iv. 2. ^s Isa. liii. 1; John xii. 38.

* Gr. *the hearing of us?* || Or, *preaching?*

Esaias saith, &c. The melancholy fact now suggested itself to the mind of St. Paul, that many, to whom the Christian message had been addressed, had refused to welcome and obey it; and he again refers to the prophetic intimation that such would be the case. This fact pressed very heavily on the Apostle's heart. He was ready to weep over the multitudes of his brethren of the race of Israel who turned away from the offers of blessing through the Lord Jesus; and he was distressed to think, that among the Gentiles, while many had embraced the Saviour, many also had stood aloof from Him. How many, for instance, of the philosophers of Athens,—how many of the licentious population of Corinth,—how many of the idolaters and money-lovers of Ephesus, had refused to bow, in humility and faith, to the Name of Jesus! In many places, alas! the gospel, designed to prove "the savour of life unto life," became to men, through their own guilty perverseness, "the savour of death unto death."

Verse 17. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* This general statement forms the conclusion to which the Apostle's reasonings in verses 14, 15 naturally led. He had argued that, to bring men to believe in Christ, so that they should habitually "call upon" Him, His message must be declared to them, and that by His own express appointment and commission. And now he affirms that "faith," which is the condition

18. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, 'their sound went into all the earth, "and their words unto the ends of the world.

t Ps. xix. 4; Matt. xxiv. 14; xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15; Col. i. 6, 23.

u See 1 Kings xviii. 10; Matt. iv. 8.

and means of salvation, "cometh by *hearing*,"—it is called forth, by the grace of the Spirit, as men earnestly listen to the announcements of Christ's ambassadors; and that the *only* announcement which God thus honours is *His own message*,—that "*word*" of His which discloses His purpose and scheme of mercy. Two important practical lessons are suggested by this declaration, especially to the ministers of Christ. They are reminded that, *while* they preach the gospel, they should expect *faith*—the thoughtful, earnest faith which rests on the Divine testimony, and appropriates the Saviour—to be called forth in those whom they address; and they are admonished that it is the Christian message, in its own simplicity and purity, not this or that laboured embellishment of it, which the Holy Spirit uses.

Verse 18. *But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, &c.* Here the Apostle dwells, with grateful satisfaction, on the large extent to which the gospel had already been proclaimed among the nations. The words in which he expresses this truth are taken from Psalm xix., in which the testimony borne to God by the works of nature is compared with the yet clearer discoveries of His character and will afforded by His own word, and in which the benefits conferred by that word on all who cordially embrace it are impressively set forth. St. Paul does not, however, give these words as a formal quotation, nor does he cite them as a prediction now fulfilled. He suggests, indeed, an *analogy* between the

19. But I say, Did not Israel know? First, Moses saith, ^a I will provoke you to jealousy by *them that are* no people, and by a ^y foolish nation I will anger you.

^a Deut. xxxii. 21; Rom. xi. 11. ^y Titus iii. 3.

witness borne to God in every land by the glories of the heavens, and the publication of the Divine word to men of all nations under the Christian dispensation; and he uses sacred words, familiar and dear both to himself and his readers, to express his satisfaction at the wide diffusion of Christian truth which had already taken place, and at the establishment of an economy characterised by its *universality*.

Verse 19. *But I say, Did not Israel know? First, Moses saith, &c.* In this and the following verses the Apostle adverts—with the delicacy of tender affection to his brethren of the race of Israel, and yet with the plainness of one who was bound to declare “the whole counsel of God”—to the fact, that the Christian economy, while it was fraught with blessings to men of every land who would come to the Lord Jesus, would yet involve, on the part of those among God’s ancient people who should stand aloof from Him, the forfeiture of their position and privileges. It was this feature of the Christian constitution which was most offensive to the Jewish nation. They were content that the Gentiles should be brought into the Church of God by being incorporated, through circumcision, with the people of Israel,—that people still forming the visible Church; but they could not bear to think that some of the Gentiles, *even as Gentiles*, should become God’s peculiar people, and many of *their own race*—all, indeed, who refused to come to the Lord Jesus for salvation and to confess His Name—should stand without, and be cut off from a church-relation

20. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, "I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me.

z Isa. lrv. 1; Rom. ix. 30.

to God. But the Apostle could not conceal, could not even cast into the shade, this solemn truth. And now he asks his Jewish brethren to reflect, that *prophetic intimations* of the establishment of such an economy had been given to them in their Sacred Writings. In support of this assertion he quotes two passages. The former is taken from the Song of Moses recorded in Deut. xxxii. In that sacred hymn, uttered when he was about to be taken to his heavenly rest, the leader of Israel set forth the glories of Jehovah, recalled some of His dealings with the chosen people, dwelt on His special care over them and their unfaithfulness to Him, and then indicated the judgments and the loss of privilege that would befall them, if they continued unfaithful and disobedient. "They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." (Verse 21.) The application of this passage to the Apostle's purpose is obvious. They who rejected the great Anointed One, the Sent of the Father, and who refused to trust in His sacrifice for salvation, cut themselves off from spiritual privileges; and God might justly transfer their privileges to those who, though once ignorant of Him, and destitute of true wisdom, embraced the Saviour when He was made known to them, and surrendered themselves fully to the Divine scheme of blessing.

Verses 20, 21. *But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought Me not; &c.* The declarations

21. But to Israel he saith, "All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

α Isa. lrv. 2

of Isaiah here cited are very intimately connected, and are, indeed, parts of one continued address. The prophet, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, first affirms, in language which St. Paul characterises as "very bold," the calling of the Gentiles to become the people of God, though once they were afar off from Him, and had no desire to enjoy His friendship; and then he goes on to intimate that, if the people of Israel continued perversely to resist His overtures of grace, they would be disowned by Him, and only the few among them that should listen to His voice should continue to be His people. (See Isaiah lrv. 1—10.) These declarations abundantly confirmed the positions of St. Paul, and showed that he had correctly represented the principles of the Divine procedures, in relation both to the favoured race of Israel, and to the nations generally. It was the counsel of God, that, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times," the blessings of salvation—the blessing, especially, of a peculiar and intimate relation to Himself—should be conferred on many who were once in ignorance and darkness; while judgment should descend on those who, possessing the light of truth, lived in sin and trampled on the Divine authority. But there was hope for Israel too. From the midst of that race, generally so disobedient and perverse, a faithful remnant should be gathered, who should gratefully accept the Divine plan of mercy, and stand in all the privileges of God's people. Even the scene of former sorrow and distress should be gladdened by the manifestation of the Divine favour, and the rich communication of spiritual blessings.

CHAPTER XI.

1. I SAY then, "Hath God cast away His people ?

a 1 Sam. xii. 22 ; Jer. xxxi. 37.

CHAPTER XI.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

IN enforcing the argument of the preceding chapter, St. Paul had adduced some remarkable passages of the ancient Scriptures, which implied that, while many of those who had lived in ignorance of God would, under the gospel, be brought to know Him, many of the race of Israel would reject His overtures of grace, and thus forfeit the privileges of His people. But he was anxious to guard against the supposition, that *the whole race of Israel was cast off*, or that the new economy involved the rejection of the Jews, *as such*. Against this false inference from his preceding reasonings he now strongly protests ; and, referring to the case of Elijah, and the answer of God to that prophet in a season of deep depression, he shows that there was still a pious *remnant* even in Israel, who had come into the Divine scheme of grace and enjoyed its blessings.

Having dwelt on the character of the Christian economy, as that which offers a *gratuitous* salvation, the result of the abounding *grace* of God in Christ, St. Paul now proceeds to define, more formally, the *actual position* of the people of Israel in respect of the Church of God and the enjoyment of His favour. He shows that the race, considered as a race, had failed of that on which their hearts were set,—to be God's *own accepted people* ; but that

God forbid. For ^b I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

^b 2 Cor. xi. 22; Phil. iii. 5.

some among them, who had embraced the Divine scheme of grace, had attained this high distinction, while they who turned away from the Lord Jesus had become hardened, as the result of their guilty resistance to the Divine counsel. That there is such a judicial hardening, in the case of those who continue perversely to reject the invitations of God, the Apostle confirms by quotations from the Sacred Writings of the Jewish Church.

And now he turns, with profound interest, to the thought, that the case of Israel is *by no means a hopeless one*,—that the spiritual privileges to which the Gentiles had attained, by embracing the Christian message, were still open to *them* if they would but turn to the Saviour,—and that *their conversion as a people* was an event which would ultimately be realised, and which would be fraught with blessing to the world. Glancing at the benefits which had already accrued to the nations through that economy at which the Jews stumbled, he affirms, with glowing exultation, that the general accession of the race of Israel to the Church of the Lord Jesus would involve a still more glorious triumph of the gospel, and a yet more imposing display of the riches of Divine grace.

St. Paul next adverts to some considerations calculated to conciliate the regard of the Gentile believers to their Jewish brethren, and to guard them against any feeling of pride as they looked upon their own position in the Church of God. He reminds them, that some of the race of Israel still stood in the privileges of God's people, and were "the firstfruit" that gave the promise that the whole "lump"

should ultimately be hallowed to Him. He reminds them, further, that *the Church of God* existed before the introduction of the Christian economy ;—that it stood as a beautiful and fruitful olive tree, whose root was to be sought in the patriarchal age ;—that the Gentile believers, though by nature belonging to a different stock, had been grafted into it, among some of the natural branches which remained ;—that although many of these last had been broken off, this was on account of their unbelief ;—and that the excision even of these was not final, for if they continued not in unbelief God would “graft them in again.” He then affirms, that the continuance of the Gentiles in their high privileges was dependent on the maintenance of their faith ; and admonishes them that they should rather cultivate a salutary fear, than indulge any haughty feeling of self-exaltation.

But here the Apostle casts a *prophetic glance into the future*, and partially unfolds a mystery which filled his own mind with sacred awe. He foresaw that there was before the race of Israel, as a whole, a long night of comparative spiritual darkness, though not such as to render it impossible for individuals among them to come to the Saviour ; he foresaw, too, that during this period the gospel would be widely diffused among the nations, and triumph over antagonistic systems ; and he foresaw that there would be called forth, in the minds of many of the Gentile believers, a yearning after the recovery of Israel to the Church of God, and an intense desire that they might share in the “mercy” which had been vouchsafed to themselves. And then he dwelt, with holy exultation, on the thought, that this result would be *actually accomplished*, and that the whole race of Israel would at last embrace *Him* who is the only Deliverer from the guilt and power of sin, and would find in Him the fulness of blessing promised to their fathers.

2. God hath not cast away His people which *He* foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith *of

c Rom. viii. 29. * Gr. *in Elias*.

And now, having completed his great argument, the Apostle winds up the doctrinal portion of this Epistle with an adoring contemplation of *the unfathomable depths of the Divine wisdom*. It is not for man to attempt to pierce into all the reasons of the Divine ways; and still less is it for man to stand forth as the counsellor of God, and to suggest to Him the methods of procedure which He should adopt. For He is the Source of all things; universal nature is sustained, and its processes carried forward, by His unceasing agency; and all things are subordinated to the manifestation of His glory, and the working out of His counsel.

Verse 1. *I say then, Hath God cast away His people?* *God forbid.* &c. The question which St. Paul here proposes contains a false inference from his preceding reasonings, and from those passages of the ancient Scriptures by which he had sustained them. Nothing was further from his thoughts, than that *the whole race* of Israel was cast off,—that that people generally was disinherited, without any respect to their conduct as individuals in accepting or rejecting the Saviour. The position for which he had contended was, that, under the Christian economy, Jews and Gentiles are placed on the same ground, and that those among them who believe in the Lord Jesus, and stand forth to confess His Name, are now the accepted people of God. From the other sentiment he recoiled with horror; and he reminds his readers, that he himself had a deep personal interest in this question, for if such was the constitution of

Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

3. 'Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, and digged down Thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

d 1 Kings xix. 10, 14.

the Christian economy, it would exclude *him*, as an Israelite, from its benefits.

Verse 2. *God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew.* Two methods of interpreting these words have been suggested. The former refers the phrase "His people" to the nation of Israel as a whole, and applies the statement, "which He foreknew," to the choice of Israel to be the favoured nation, and the depositary of the law and institutions of Jehovah. The latter restricts the words "His people" to those of the Israelites who were truly such, and whom God, in His mysterious prescience, recognised as sustaining this character. The weight of argument seems to be in favour of the latter view. Not only is it recommended by the Apostle's use of similar phraseology in viii. 29, 30; but it is in accordance with the appeal which he immediately makes to the state of things in the time of Elijah, and the conclusion which he bases upon it, that even then, amidst the general unfaithfulness of Israel, there was a select remnant, known to God, who had come into His plan of grace through faith in Jesus, and who still enjoyed the highest privileges of His people.

Verses 2, 3. *Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, &c.* That portion of the history of Elijah which St. Paul here brings forward is of deep interest, and suggests the most valuable lessons.

4. But what saith the answer of God unto him ?

That eminent prophet had just been honoured to vindicate before Ahab and the people of Israel the exclusive Godhead of Jehovah, and to confound the pretensions of the priests of Baal. The judgment inflicted upon these last, who had seduced God's people to idolatry, inflamed the hatred of Jezebel towards him, and she sent to him a message, that nothing should satisfy her but his blood. A strange feeling of depression seems to have come over the prophet; and having, first of all, fled to Beersheba, and left his servant there, "he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree, and requested for himself that he might die." (1 Kings xix. 4.) Sleep now fell upon his eyes; and, as he slept, an angel was sent to him to direct his course. The heavenly messenger aroused him, and caused him to partake of food; and then Elijah "went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God." (Verse 8.) It was while he was there that he gave utterance to the language which the Apostle cites. His heart was almost overwhelmed with sadness as he looked upon the state of Israel. Everywhere he saw the altars of Baal erected, and the worship of Jehovah forsaken; and he lamented that he stood alone, as an avowed follower of the God of Israel, and that even his life was relentlessly sought by his enemies. But God condescended to relieve his depression, and to send him forth afresh to active service, while He taught him some important lessons as to the modes of His own gracious operations.

Verse 4. *But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to Myself &c.* This reply of Jehovah to the desponding complaint of the prophet was preceded by the

‘I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to *the image of Baal*.

5. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

e 1 Kings xix. 18. f Rom. ix. 27.

direction to go and stand upon the sacred mount of Horeb ; and, as he stood there, he heard the sound of a great and strong wind which rent the mountain ;—next, he felt the terrible shock of an earthquake ;—then, he saw a devouring fire ;—and, last of all, he heard a still, small voice. Thus did God prepare him to understand, that He sometimes sees fit to work, not by the mightier processes which startle the careless and arrest universal attention, but rather by a silent operation on individual hearts, and that, as the result of that silent operation, there would be found a few who, in the midst of general unfaithfulness and apostasy, were truly devoted to His fear and love. And then he declared, “ Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.” (1 Kings xix. 18.)

Verse 5. *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* Here St. Paul applies the incident which he had just brought forward, and, in particular, the answer of God to His desponding prophet, to the state of things which existed among the race of Israel in his own day, in reference to the claims of the Lord Jesus, and the enjoyment of the blessings of His grace. Just as there was a remnant in ancient Israel, at the period of its most general defection, who never succumbed to the prevalent idolatry, even so now there was a select remnant who, renouncing their own righteousness, came into God’s scheme of grace in Christ, and thus stood

6. And *if* by grace, then *is it* no more of works : otherwise grace is no more grace. But *if it be* of works, then it is no more grace : otherwise work is no more work.

g Rom. iv. 4, 5 ; Gal. v. 4. See Dent. ix. 4, 5.

among *His chosen ones*. The sentiment, as thus brought out, is in accordance with the Apostle's statement in ix. 32, 33. His words are, of course, susceptible of the Calvinistic interpretation ; but they do not necessarily require it. The stress of his remark is on the word "grace," on which he still dwells ; and the expression which he uses marks the fact, that the election of God proceeds on an economy which holds forth every blessing as perfectly gratuitous, and altogether excludes human merit from being, in whole or in part, the ground of our acceptance.

Verse 6. *And if by grace, then it is no more of works : otherwise grace is no more grace. &c.* The sentiment which St. Paul here enforces is, that if our enjoyment of the privileges of God's people is of grace *at all*, it must be of grace *wholly* : it cannot be of grace and, at the same time, of works. The introduction of the latter element, in any degree, would set aside the *gratuitous* character of the act of God in admitting us to the blessings of His chosen. Throughout the doctrinal discussions of this Epistle, the Apostle had given prominence to the free, unmerited character of our justification ; and he had shown, that the very arrangement which makes *faith* the condition of that justification has its foundation in the necessity for preserving and openly manifesting the gratuitous character of the blessing. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." (iv. 16.) The *ground* of our acceptance is the work

7. What then? ¹Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were ||blinded.

8. (According as it is written, 'God hath given

¹ Rom. ix. 31; x. 3. || Or, *hardened*. 2 Cor. iii. 14.

² Isa. xxix. 10.

and sacrifice of the adorable Redeemer; and the one office of faith is to connect us, in our conscious sinfulness and impotence, with Him through whom salvation flows to us as the free gift of God.—It is doubtful whether the latter part of this verse should be retained; as it is wanting in some of the best and most ancient MSS. If it forms a portion of St. Paul's argument, we must regard him as lingering on the thought, that there is an utter and irreconcilable opposition between the two methods of salvation, by grace and by works.

Verse 7. *What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, &c.* In these words St. Paul formally states the actual position of the people of Israel in relation to the Church of God, and its high and glorious privileges. *The race, as a whole, had failed to attain that which they eagerly desired,—to be the peculiar and accepted people of Jehovah; but some among them—even they who embraced God's scheme of gratuitous justification—had attained it; and the rest, ungratefully closing their eyes against the manifestation of God in Christ, and refusing to accept the free offer of peace and blessing in Him, were hardened, their spiritual perceptions becoming less and less distinct, and their hearts being more and more estranged from that which is spiritual and Divine.*

Verse 8. *(According as it is written, God hath given them*

them the spirit of ||slumber, ^keyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

9. And David saith, 'Let their table be made a

|| Or, *remorse*. ^k Deut. xxix. 4; Isa. vi. 9; Jer. v. 21; Ezek. xii. 2;
Matt. xiii. 14; John xii. 40; Acts xxviii. 26, 27.

l Ps. lxix. 22.

the spirit of slumber, &c. The position which the Apostle had now assumed,—that members of the race of Israel who aspired to be the accepted people of God, but refused to accept the Divine counsel, might become the subjects of a blinding, hardening influence,—was calculated to shock some of those whom he yet hoped to win to Christ. But it was a position too important in itself, and having too momentous a bearing on the state and prospects of God's ancient people, for him either to shrink from affirming it, or to pass over it lightly. He fixes attention upon it, and adduces in support of it passages from the Old Testament Scriptures. In the verse before us, he combines two passages, Deut. xxix. 4, and Isaiah xxix. 10, expressing their general sense, instead of giving their exact terms. Both these referred to the race of Israel; and both involved the principle, that, under the Divine administration, there is a judicial blinding of those who obstinately turn away from the light of truth, and refuse to follow the drawings of Divine grace. The mind becomes, at length, insensible to the truth which it has disregarded: there is no distinct and vivid apprehension of that truth, and no deep and earnest feeling is called forth by it.

Verses 9, 10. *And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, &c.* As an additional confirmation of the principle which he had just affirmed, St. Paul now cites a

snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them :

10. "Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.

11. I say then, Have they stumbled that they

m Ps. lxi. 23.

passage from one of the most remarkable of the Messianic Psalms,—a Psalm which depicted the great Restorer in His deepest sorrows, while it intimated the ruin that should fall upon His enemies, and set forth the joys of His humble, devoted followers. In quoting the passage, the Apostle adopts, with some slight modification, the reading of the Septuagint. The precise terms of the Hebrew text are not given, but the same thoughts are expressed, and the last clause, "bow down their back alway," which takes the place of "make their loins continually to shake," conveys the same idea of overwhelming and constant terror. This prophetic denunciation of judgment referred to those who should reject and persecute the Messiah, and thus had a direct application to the case which the Apostle had in view. By these quotations from the ancient Scriptures he both illustrated and confirmed his position, that resistance to the truth of God, and an obstinate refusal to accept His message of grace, must be followed by visitations of suffering and a judicial hardening.

Verse 11. *I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles, &c.* Here the Apostle guards against an exaggerated inference from the argument he had just advanced. He saw, indeed, that many of the race of Israel were judicially blinded, and that, having stumbled at the true Messiah, and the comprehensive offers

should fall? God forbid: but *rather* "through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

n Acts xiii. 46; xviii. 6; xxii. 18, 21; xxviii. 24, 28; Rom. x. 19.

of grace through Him, they had lost their position in the Church of God: but he goes on to argue, that the case even of these was not yet absolutely hopeless, and that *the race of Israel, as such*, was by no means excluded from the gracious regards of God. The correct view of the case was, that "through their fall," or, more literally, "through their *offence*," "salvation" had come "unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy." Two things seem to be comprehended in the former part of this statement; first, that, as one effect of the rejection of the gospel by the Jewish people, the almost undivided attention of the first preachers of Christianity—of those, at least, who laboured in Gentile countries—was given to the Gentiles, to lead them to Christ, and then to build them up in faith and holiness; (Acts xiii. 46, 47; xviii. 6;) and, secondly, that it was the peculiar character of the Christian economy, as inviting all men to share its blessings upon the same terms, and securing no pre-eminence to the Jew over the Gentile who should believe in Jesus, which formed one chief ground of *offence* to that people who had so long gloried in their own religious superiority. Nor should the consideration dwelt upon by Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh, in his remarks on this passage, be overlooked. "Had the Jews," he says, "as a body, received Christianity, that religion would have worn to the Gentiles the repugnant aspect of the religion of the Jews. In this case, too, it is highly probable that the converted Jewish nation would have continued, as so many of the individual converts from

12. Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the ||diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

|| Or, *decay, or loss.*

among them did, 'zealous for the law of Moses.' . . . It is easy to see what obstacles such a state of things would have placed in the way of the Chirstianization of the Gentiles. All the difficulties which lay in the way of a heathen becoming a Jew, would have lain in the way of his becoming a Christian. But when Christianity was embraced only by a small minority of Jews, it became evident that Judaism and Christianity were two very different things; and when it was understood that one great cause why the majority of the Jews rejected Christianity was its liberal character,—its placing Jews and Gentiles on a level as to religious privilege,—it is easy to see how its rejection by the former would be a powerful recommendation of it to the latter."—But the state of things thus brought about was designed to *react* on the Jewish people, and to awaken regret and self-reproach, that they had allowed themselves to be despoiled of privileges which they might have enjoyed, and which were, indeed, in the first instance, earnestly pressed on their acceptance.

Verse 12. *Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them &c.* This animating thought was naturally suggested by the views which St. Paul had just set forth. Christianity was already widely diffused among the nations, conferring spiritual riches on multitudes who had been living in the destitution of idolatry and vain speculation; and to this result the rejection of the true Messiah by the Jewish people had, in

13. For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office :

o Acts ix. 15 ; xiii. 2 ; xxii. 21 ; Rom. xv. 16 ; Gal. i. 16 ; ii. 2, 7, 8, 9 ; Ephes. iii. 8 ; 1 Tim. ii. 7 ; 2 Tim. i. 11.

some degree, contributed. But the Apostle asks, 'How much more extensive will be the diffusion of the Christian salvation, and how much higher and more glorious will be the state of things, when the Jewish people, "provoked to jealousy," shall seek to resume their forfeited position among God's people, by embracing the Lord Jesus, and standing forth to confess His Name?' For now that the character of Christianity is understood, and its provisions of grace are seen to be adapted to all mankind, the accession of Israel generally to the Lord Jesus would produce a most beneficial effect upon the whole world. Even those Gentiles who had stood aloof from the Saviour might then be induced to turn to Him, and seek the riches of His grace. Christianity would appear in the grandest and most imposing manifestation of its claims, and would scatter its blessings over the whole human family.

Verses 13, 14. *For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, &c.* Here the Apostle pointedly directs his address to the Gentile believers, asserting for himself a special claim on their attention and regard ; and he goes on both to impress on them the surpassing advantages which would result from the reception of Israel again into the Church of God, and to admonish them that, while they rejoiced in their own privileges, they must not indulge a feeling of proud self-complacency, or vaunt themselves as superior to those who anciently constituted that Church, but rather seek to restore them to their forfeited position. It is pleasing to contemplate the blending of

14. If by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are my flesh*, and *might save some of them*.

15. For if the casting away of them *be* the reconciling of the world, what *shall* the receiving of *them be*, but life from the dead?

p 1 Cor. vii. 16; ix. 22; 1 Tim. iv. 16; James v. 20.

different feelings in the mind of St. Paul, as he thought of the special sphere of service assigned to him by the Lord Jesus. On the one hand, he was profoundly impressed with the dignity and greatness of his vocation, to plant Christianity in lands where before it existed not, and to preach the Lord Jesus to those who had never heard His Name. He "magnified His office," esteeming it the most honourable to which he could have been called, and seeking to the very utmost to fulfil its duties, by gathering as many of the Gentiles as possible into the fold of Christ. But, on the other hand, his heart turned to his own people with tender solicitude, and he longed to be the instrument of leading some among them to reconsider their position, and to yield themselves to Him whose grace they had rejected, so as again to have a distinguished place in the Church of God.

Verse 15. *For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, &c.* In this verse St. Paul repeats, though in a different form, the sentiment which he had expressed in verse 12,—that if the diffusion of the gospel among the Gentiles had been promoted by the fact, that Israel stood aloof from its provisions, and thus forfeited their distinguished privileges, the triumph of Christianity would be far loftier and more complete, when that people generally should embrace its overtures, and be again

16. For if *the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy* : and if the root *be holy, so are the branches*.

q Lev. xxiii. 10 ; Num. xv. 18, 19, 20, 21.

received into the Church. Such an issue would be as "life from the dead,"—joyous and triumphant even as the final victory of Christ and His people over the last enemy.

Verse 16. *For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy : and if the root be holy, so are the branches*. Each of these metaphors has an important relation to the Apostle's argument. In the former, the truly pious among the Jews—they who had received the Saviour, and had confessed Him before men—are represented as "the firstfruit" of the whole body of that people, who should at last be brought to believe in Him, and be consecrated to His service. Many expositors, indeed, take a different view of this metaphor. They refer "the firstfruit" to the *ancestors* of the Jewish people, and understand the Apostle to argue that, inasmuch as *they* were consecrated to God, and were peculiarly acknowledged by Him, so the whole body of their descendants stood in a special relation to Him, and, though for the most part destitute of personal holiness, enjoyed an outward consecration. The chief argument alleged in favour of this view is, that the metaphor is thus made to correspond more nearly to that which follows, in its bearing upon the general course of thought. But the exposition given above appears more simple and natural ; nor is there any inconsistency in supposing, that St. Paul, in employing the second metaphor, on which he lingers with special interest, intended to present the subject under a different view. Being about to expostulate with the Gentile believers, as to the feelings which they should cherish towards those members of the race of Israel who

17. And if 'some of the branches be broken off,
'and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in
|| among them, and with them partakest of the root
and fatness of the olive tree ;

r Jer. xi. 16. s Acts ii. 39 ; Ephes. ii. 12, 13. || Or, *for them.*

were now cut off from church-privileges, he compares the Church to a good and fruitful olive tree, the root of which was to be sought in the patriarchal age. Indeed, when he speaks of "the root" of that tree, he seems to allude to *Abraham*, as the father of the faithful. (iv. 16, 17.) The position, then, which he here assumes is, that the branches partake of the character of the root. All the natural descendants of Abraham who resemble him in his faith,—that faith which simply and firmly rested on the Divine counsel,—are as branches in the Church of God ; and when Israel generally shall be brought to embrace the Lord Jesus, they shall share in the purity, and dignity, and blessedness, of their great ancestor.

Verse 17. *And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, &c.* This verse contains a direct appeal to the Gentile believers, and forcibly represents their position in the Church of God. It recognises the fact, that some, though *only* some, of the natural descendants of Abraham were cut off from the Church, and ceased to be numbered among the true Israel ; and then it shows, that the Gentile believers, though originally alien from the Church of God, had been brought into it, and shared with the believing Israelites in the rich and ample privileges which belonged to all the true children of Abraham. In illustration of the application which St. Paul here makes of the practice of grafting, Tholuck and some others properly refer to the fact, that, among the ancients, grafts

18. 'Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

19. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

t 1 Cor. x. 12.

from wild fruit-trees were sometimes inserted into fruit-bearing trees, in order to increase their fruitfulness. This usage is attested by Columella and Palladius, two ancient writers on agricultural affairs.

Verse 18. *Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, &c.* St. Paul here enforces the practical lesson to be derived from a correct view of the relation of the Gentile believers to the Church of God. It was not for them who had been introduced to that Church of which Abraham was, so to speak, the root, to imagine themselves superior to the Jewish believers, or even to cherish any feeling of self-exaltation as they compared themselves with those Israelites who stood aloof from the Lord Jesus. They should rather be impressed with the abounding grace which had been shown to them, and should long for the restoration of the fallen members of the race of Israel to their forfeited privileges. Should a disposition to boast at any time arise in their hearts, the Apostle charges them to repress it by remembering, that the Church was not then newly formed, and formed of them as its first members; but that they were only admitted to that Church which God constituted when He separated Abraham from the nations, and constituted him the father of all believers in every age.

Verse 19. *Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.* This is the plea which some

20. Well ; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. *Be not highminded, but *fear :

21. For if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest He also spare not thee.

* Rom. xii. 16. * Prov. xxviii. 14 ; Isa. lxvi. 2 ; Phil. ii. 12.

of the Gentile Christians might allege, as justifying their boasting over the fallen members of the race of Israel. It is, in effect, that these last had been set aside from their privileges, in order that *they* might enjoy them ; or, to vary slightly the mode of presenting the idea, that it was through the *special love* of God to them *as Gentiles*, and with a view to their introduction to His Church, that the Jews had been cut off from their former advantages. With this plea St. Paul now proceeds to deal.

Verses 20, 21. *Well ; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. &c.* In replying to the allegation just advanced, the Apostle first allows that there was some truth underlying it. It was, for instance, true, that God designed the admission of Gentiles, under the Christian economy, to His visible Church, without submitting to the rites of the Mosaic law ; and that no opposition of Israel to this course could alter the Divine purpose. It was also true, that it was this very arrangement which caused many of the Jews to reject the gospel, and thus to forfeit their position in the Church. But, while admitting all this, St. Paul gives prominence to another consideration, which materially affected the whole case, and which was amply sufficient to shut out all boasting and self-complacency. That consideration is, that it was no part of the *plan* of God, that any members of the race of Israel, as

22. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, *if* thou continue in *His* goodness: otherwise *thou* also shalt be cut off.

y 1 Cor. xv. 2; Heb. iii. 6, 14. z John xv. 2.

such, should forfeit their church-privileges, but that they who did so, did so through their *personal unbelief*. So, too, it was no part of His plan that the Gentiles, *as such*, without respect to their faith or want of faith, should be constituted His people; but they who now belonged to His Church did so through their *personal trust in the Lord Jesus*, and their retention of their position was conditional on the continuance of that faith. No feeling of self-sufficiency, therefore, should, for a moment, be indulged; but only a salutary *fear*, lest they should give up their hold of the Saviour, or turn away in heart from Him through the seductions of the world, and thus the unbelief which had ruined so many who were naturally related to Abraham should also ruin them.

Verse 22. *Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them &c.* The arrangements of God which St. Paul had now traced involved a display both of His righteous severity towards those who rejected His counsel, and of His abounding goodness towards those who embraced it; and the Apostle calls upon the Gentile believers to contemplate these manifestations of the Divine character with humility and reverence. And he again recurs to the momentous truth, that the standing of men in the Divine favour, and in all the privileges of His true, spiritual Church, is *conditional*. They who enjoy these privileges, and who rejoice in the abounding of the Divine goodness, must “continue in that goodness,”—must cherish the

23. And they also, "if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.

24. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree?

a 2 Cor. iii. 16.

blessings which it confers, and persevere in the course of holy service to which it leads. If, instead of this, they yield to the solicitations of the Tempter, and give up their living faith in the Lord Jesus, they will forfeit their position, and fall again into condemnation.

Verse 23. *And they, also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: &c.* Here the Apostle turns to the brighter side of the general principle,—that the continuance of men in their actual position, either as the people of God, or as cut off from the privileges of His Church, is *conditional*. The state of those Israelites who now stood aloof from the Saviour was *not* one of *final rejection*. Their unbelief might yet give place to an humble and dutiful admission of the claims of the Lord Jesus, and a personal coming to Him for acceptance and eternal life. And the result of this would be, that they would be restored to all the blessings of God's people, and receive the richest communications of His love. Nothing in the Divine counsel stood opposed to their return; and their gracious reception would be eminently worthy of the perfections of Jehovah.

Verse 24. *For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, &c.* Pursuing the train of thought

25. For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be ^bwise in your own conceits; that ^c||blindness in part is happened to Israel, ^duntil the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

^b Rom. xii. 16. ^c Verse 7; 2 Cor. iii. 14. || Or, *hardness*.
^d Luke xxi. 24; Rev. vii. 9.

which he had just entered upon, St. Paul appeals to the Gentile believers as to *the readiness of God* to restore the Israelites, upon their reception of the Lord Jesus, to the full privileges of His Church. His words suggest the thought, that it would be an act most welcome to the heart of Jehovah, thus to restore them; and he founds this upon the fact, that they were "the natural branches" of that tree from which they had been cut off, but into which they might be afresh engrafted. He who had chosen to avow Himself "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob," and who, through so many ages, fixed His dwelling-place in Zion, would specially delight to receive again the members of that favoured race, and to "bless them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Verse 25. *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, &c.* Here St. Paul partially unveils the future, as it had been disclosed to his own mind by the Omniscient Spirit; and adverts to the fact, that there was before the race of Israel a period of comparative spiritual darkness and hardening, until "the fulness of the Gentiles" should be gathered to the Lord Jesus. But he softens his assertion by the introduction of the words, "*in part.*" He did not regard the conversion of any Israelite as impossible; and while he perceived, with deep sorrow, the general insensibility of his race to the claims of the Lord

26. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, 'There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob :

e Isa. lix. 20. See Ps. xiv. 7.

Jesus, he perceived, also, that there was hope for Israel, and he longed to be the instrument of saving some of them. Rays of truth fell on many minds, and if these were followed, and the softening influence of the Spirit was cherished, these individuals would be led onward to the Saviour for life and peace. But when the gospel should have triumphed throughout the nations generally, the hardness of Israel would cease, and that people would again take their place in the Church of God.

Verses 26, 27. *And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, &c.* This was the grand and triumphant issue, the anticipation of which brought comfort to the Apostle's mind, even while he mourned over the alienation of so many of his Jewish brethren from the Saviour. The natural import of his words is, that, at the period in question, the people of Israel generally shall embrace the Lord Jesus, and rejoice in His salvation. The question of their national restoration to their own land is not here alluded to. In support of this prophetic anticipation, the Apostle cites Isaiah lix. 20, 21;—a passage which had its primary accomplishment in the advent of our Lord, and in the rich blessings of the economy which He established, but which was to be again fulfilled when, coming in the power of His Spirit, He should turn the hearts of Israel to Himself, and confer on them every privilege of the covenant of grace. Dr. Patrick Fairbairn thus explains and comments on the variations in the passage, as here cited, from the form in

27. *For this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

f Isa. xxvii. 9; Jer. xxxi. 31, &c.; Heb. viii. 8; x. 16.

which it appears in Isaiah:—"This citation differs less from the Septuagint than from the Hebrew, but it does not exactly accord with either. 'The Redeemer shall come to Zion,' or '*for Zion*,' is the first clause in the original; the Septuagint has '*for the sake of Zion*;' but the Apostle says, '*out of Zion*. And in the following clause, what is in the original, '*unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob*,' becomes with the Apostle, who here follows the Septuagint, '*He shall turn ungodliness from Jacob*.' Peculiar as these changes are, they proceed upon the same principle as that which we have so often had occasion to notice in previous examples; without in reality altering the meaning, the Apostle throws the passage into a form which virtually explains while it quotes. Such an alteration is put upon the original passage as might render the only fulfilment it could henceforth receive more easy of apprehension. Christ, it intimates, will again come to Zion, as He has already done, and come to such as turn from transgression in Jacob,—namely, for the purpose of blessing them and doing them good. But having already come and finished transgression, Christ has put an end to the old state and constitution of things, so that the Zion that then was is now abolished: Zion, in the proper sense, is above, the residence of the Divine King; and when He comes to visit His people for the full execution of His covenant, He must come out of Zion, even while, in a sense, He may be said to come to it. And, as regards the Jewish people, now rooted in apostasy, He must also, in connection with that coming, turn them *from* ungodliness;

28. As concerning the Gospel, *they are enemies for your sakes*: but as touching the election, *they are* ^g *beloved for the fathers' sakes.*

29. For the gifts and calling of God *are* ^h *without repentance.*

g Deut. vii. 8; ix. 5; x. 15. *h* Num. xxiii. 19.

for only thus could the ends of the covenant in their behalf be accomplished, and the Lord's coming be attended by the benefits pointed at by the prophets. It is, therefore, the same prophecy still,—only, by the verbal alterations he puts on it, the Apostle adapts it to the time when he wrote, and renders it more distinctly indicative of the manner in which it was to find what still remained of its accomplishment. The last clause, 'when I have taken away their sins,' is a compendious expression for the state of blessing and acceptance, in which the people are contemplated by the prophet, and which with him is more especially connected with the indwelling agency of the Spirit." (*Hermeneutical Manual*, pp. 394, 395.)

Verses 28, 29. *As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, &c.* In these words St. Paul defines the present position of Israel, and at the same time suggests the ground of his confidence that there would arrive a period in which that people generally should come into the Christian Church, and rejoice in the fulness of spiritual blessing. Through their dislike of the comprehensive character of the gospel scheme, and their resentment of the favour which under it was shown to the Gentiles, they have now placed themselves in an attitude of antagonism to God, and are regarded by Him with displeasure; but God has not cancelled His special relation to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, nor is He indifferent to

30. For as ye 'in times past have not || believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

31. Even so have these also now not || believed, that through your mercy they also might obtain mercy.

† Ephes. ii. 2 ; Col. iii. 7. || Or, *obeyed*. || Or, *obeyed*.

His covenant-engagement, to be a God to them and to their seed. His pitying love waits to welcome the race of Israel, and to reinstate them, upon their coming to the Lord Jesus, in their forfeited privileges. The complete fulfilment of the promises made to their fathers implies their ultimate conversion as a people.—It is difficult to express, in human language, the feelings of the Divine Mind ; but these words of St. Paul seem to intimate, that God Himself still takes special interest in the race of Israel, on account of the distinctions which He conferred upon their fathers, and the high calling which He assigned to them in the arrangements of His Church. In all His judicial acts, God, as the Moral Ruler of the universe, applies with strict impartiality the great principles of His government ; nor is any favour to the race of Israel allowed to interfere with the comprehensive provisions of the economy of grace, and the blessings which flow from the seed of Abraham to all the nations of the earth. But the Divine compassion lingers over that race ; and their ultimate return to the Church of God is an object dear to His heart, while it will involve the brightest display of His glory.

Verses 30, 31. *For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy &c.* Here St. Paul draws a parallel between the case of the Gentile believers, and that of the Jewish people, as he looked forward, with con-

32. For ^k God hath || concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.

^k Rom. iii. 9 ; Gal. iii. 22. || Or, *shut them all up together.*

fidest hope, to their general conversion. The Gentile Christians were formerly disobedient to God, and destitute of the privileges of His house : but now they were invested with those privileges, under that constitution of grace which proved a stumblingblock to the Jews, and even the unbelief of these last caused the gospel to be more widely diffused among them. Even so, he affirms, the Jewish people now stand in an attitude of unbelief and disobedience, that the mercy which embraced the Gentiles, and the consciousness of which would make many among them long for the participation of Israel in it, might ultimately embrace them again, and confer on them, as a matter of grace, the privileges which they had forfeited. Some able expositors, as Erasmus and Calvin, place the comma in the latter clause after the word ἐλέει, "mercy," so as to make the import of that clause to be, "Even so have these also now disobeyed through the mercy shown to you, in order that they also may obtain mercy." This is admissible ; but the parallelism is more complete according to the other view, and the sentiment which it suggests—that the grace conferred upon the Gentiles, and the love to the Jewish people which it should call forth, would at length contribute to the conversion of Israel—is one which finds a most appropriate place in this part of the Apostle's argument.

Verse 32. *For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.* With this view of the Divine procedures the Apostle closes the *argument* of this chapter. His words do not imply that God *designed* the

33. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! 'how unsearchable *are* His judgments, and ^m His ways past finding out !

l Ps. xxxvi. 6. m Job xi. 7 ; Ps. xcii. 5.

disobedience of either Jews or Gentiles,—that disobedience which assumed the form of unbelief and resistance to His scheme of grace. But, inasmuch as Jews and Gentiles had equally placed themselves in this attitude towards God, they were “shut up” by Him, with no method of escape but that which His free, abounding mercy opened to them. None of them could cancel the demerit of his past sin and unbelief, or open to himself the way of life : but the riches of Divine grace met this case of utter helplessness and ruin, and even yet the mercy of God waited to flow forth to them all, and to confer on them the riches of His peace.

· Verse 33. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable &c.* The great argument of St. Paul, as to the arrangements of the scheme of grace in Christ, and the position of the Jewish people towards the Church of God, was now finished : and he gives utterance to a series of devout exclamations, suggested by the course of thought which he had pursued. He had reviewed God's past dispensations towards mankind, and he had cast a prophetic glance into the future ; and now he expresses the reverence and awe with which he dwelt on these themes. There is great difference of opinion, among thoughtful expositors, whether the first clause of this verse should be rendered, “O the depth of the riches, and the wisdom, and the knowledge, of God,” or whether the translation given in our Authorised Version should be adhered to. According to the former view, the phrase “the riches of God” must be understood of His *abounding*

34. * For who hath known the mind of the Lord ?
or ° who hath been His counsellor ?

° Job xv. 8 ; Isa. xl. 13 ; Jer. xxiii. 18 ; 1 Cor. ii. 16. o Job xxxvi. 22.

grace ; and in support of this use of the term, reference is made to the similar phrase, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," in Ephesians iii. 8. The words of the Apostle are susceptible of either of these renderings : but that just explained seems the more simple and natural, while the sentiment which it suggests is grander and more comprehensive. We may well linger on this remarkable utterance of St. Paul. He felt that he stood on the verge of an unfathomable depth. The "judgments" of God—His purposes and administrative acts—are beyond our full comprehension ; and His "ways," regarded in all their variety and amplitude, are inscrutable. The thoughts of the Divine mind,—the reasons of the Divine plans,—the seeming anomalies of the Divine government,—the apparent interruptions of the scheme which God is carrying out, and yet the ultimate subordination even of these interruptions to a more glorious issue,—surpass the loftiest efforts of our powers. Even the inspired Apostle, whose views were so comprehensive, and who was enabled to cast a prophetic glance into the future, felt that he could form only a partial and inadequate conception of the Divine counsels.

Verse 34. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? or who hath been His counsellor ?* Here another thought suggests itself to the reverent mind of St. Paul. It is not for man to stand at the side of God, to advise Him as to the course of procedure which He shall adopt. God does not enter into consultation with His creatures before He forms His plans. His own infinite "wisdom" comprehends every

35. Or ^r who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again ?

36. For ^q of Him, and through Him, and to Him, *are* all things : ^r to ^{*} whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.

p Job xxxv. 7 ; xli. 11. *q* 1 Cor. viii. 6 ; Col. i. 16.
r Gal. i. 5 ; 1 Tim. i. 17 ; 2 Tim. iv. 18 ; Heb. xiii. 21 ; 1 Peter v. 11 ;
 2 Peter iii. 18 ; Jude 25 ; Rev. i. 6. *** Gr. *Him*.

relation, with its varied requirements and interests ; and his perfect “knowledge” surveys the past, the present, and the future. There is an *allusion* in this verse to Job xv. 8, Isaiah xl. 13, and Jeremiah xxiii. 18 ; but not one of these passages is cited. The sentiments which they convey are reproduced, and that in similar language : but this is all.

Verse 35. *Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again ?* Here, again, the Apostle seems to have had in view two passages of the Old Testament,—Job xxxv. 7 and xli. 11. The sentiment is, that *man cannot impart to God*, but can only receive out of His fulness. The proper attitude, therefore, of every human being, in the presence of the Eternal One, is that of lowly reverence, dutiful submission, and confiding love. Nor is it man alone that should stand in awe, and feel his nothingness, in the presence of Jehovah. Every rational creature should cherish these sentiments and feelings, and should lie low at the footstool of the Universal Creator and Lord.

Verse 36. *For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things : to whom be glory for ever. Amen.* This is one of those comprehensive declarations of the Divine word the fulness of which human thought must ever fail to trace. There is probably an *allusion*—though *only* an allusion—to the sublime doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. The difficulty which lies in the way of recognising an explicit reference

to that doctrine is, that while all things are *of* the Father, and *through* the Son, the third expression, "*to Him*," is scarcely that which applies, specially and distinctly, to the Holy Spirit.—The general sentiment of this verse is most sublime and awe-inspiring. The Eternal God is the Fountain of all being; by His power and wisdom the whole universe has been produced and ordered, and is still sustained; and to the manifestation of His glory, and the accomplishment of His purposes, all things are subservient. To Him, consequently, every creature should offer its loftiest ascriptions of praise: to Him the anthem of adoration and thanksgiving should ascend throughout eternity. The lowliest reverence becomes us, as we think of His majesty; and we should acknowledge His perfections, even when we cannot accurately trace them in the vast sweep of His administration.

CHAPTER XII.

1. I *BESEECH* you therefore, brethren, by the*a* 2 Cor. x. 1.

CHAPTER XII.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

WE now enter upon the *Second Part* of the Epistle, containing chiefly *practical exhortations* founded upon the scheme of grace which the Apostle had unfolded.

As the first general duty devolving on believers, St. Paul exhorts the Roman Christians to a course of *entire self-dedication to God*, charging them also to resist the ungodly tendencies of the present world, and to exhibit in their whole deportment and conduct the effect of that inward renewal which they had experienced. He then adverts to *their intercourse with each other in the Church*, and, in particular, admonishes those who were favoured with spiritual gifts, or who held official positions, to apply themselves to their respective duties with humility and diligence, each observing his own sphere of service, and being always ready to acknowledge the gifts and labours of his brethren. The Apostle then takes a wider range of thought; and, contemplating Christians as mingling not only with their brethren but with the ungodly, he addresses to them *various exhortations*, setting forth the temper which they should maintain, and the pure and noble principles which they should habitually develop.

Verse 1. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies &c.* This exhortation

mercies of God, ^bthat ye ^cpresent your bodies ^da living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*

^b 1 Peter ii. 5. ^c Ps. i. 13, 14; Rom. vi. 13, 16, 19; 1 Cor. vi. 13, 20.
^d Heb. x. 20.

fitly stands at the commencement of that series of practical admonitions upon which St. Paul now enters. Habitual self-dedication to God is the first and all-comprehending duty devolving on those who are accepted in Christ, and who thus know by experience the preciousness of those "mercies of God" which are disclosed in the mediatorial economy. There is an obvious similarity between this exhortation and that which occurs in vi. 13. In both the Apostle gives prominence to the consecration of *the body*, with all its energies, to the Divine service; recognising, at the same time, the principle of self-dedication as having its seat in *the spirit*, which "*presents*" the sacrifice, as it thoughtfully regulates the appetites of the body, and directs all its actions, to the glory of God. Every Christian, the Apostle teaches us, should look upon himself as a *consecrated* man,—one specially given up to the Divine service, so as to be even a "sacrifice" to God. In a few carefully chosen words he marks the features of this sacrifice. It is "*a living sacrifice*,"—not only as opposed to the *slain animals* which were offered under the law, but as distinguished by that *new life* which the Spirit imparts, and which, pervading the soul, diffuses its influence through our entire nature. We are to "*yield ourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead*," and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God.—It is "*holy*,"—for the sanctifying grace of the Spirit really consecrates and purifies those who believe. And this sanctification reaches to the body.

2. And 'be not conformed to this world: but *be* ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye

e 1 Peter i. 14; 1 John ii. 15.

f Ephes. i. 18; iv. 23; Col. i. 21, 22; iii. 10.

It regulates and directs our physical appetites,—governs the tongue, so that our conversation shall be in accordance with the law of truth, and purity, and kindness,—and influences and moulds our entire conduct.—And the sacrifice of which the Apostle speaks is “*acceptable unto God.*” He looks with complacency upon all “that are in Christ,” and who “walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” For He delights in holiness; and He beholds in the uniform giving up of ourselves to His service, the designed result of the work and sacrifice of the Incarnate Son. Such a course of self-dedication to God, the Apostle further affirms, is our “*reasonable*”—or “*rational*”—“service;”—one suited to a *rational nature*, one which only is worthy of such a nature, and in which only it can find its intended repose and satisfaction.

Verse 2. *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, &c.* There is an intimate and instructive connection between this verse and the preceding one. The first duty of every believer is habitually to give himself up to God, and to live as a dedicated person. But this course of self-dedication is to be maintained in a world full of ungodliness, in which the Christian is continually exposed to seductive influences, and is in danger of acting upon maxims, and adopting practices, opposed to the spirituality of his calling. Against this danger he is to guard. Not only is he to refrain from those pursuits, and pleasures, and amusements, in which the ungodly tendencies of the world appear, and which

may *prove* what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

3. For I say, ^gthrough the grace given unto me,

^g Ephes. v. 10, 17; 1 Thess. iv. 3.

^h Rom. i. 5; xv. 15; 1 Cor. iii. 10; xv. 10; Gal. ii. 9; Ephes. iii. 2, 7, 8.

evinced a mind still "after the flesh;" but he is to present a character directly the reverse, as exhibiting those new principles and aspirations which the Spirit has called forth within him. The outward "*transformation*" is the natural and designed result of the inward "*renewal*." And the effect of this constant striving against the ungodly element of the world, and this constant endeavour to develop the new principles of the Christian character, is, that we "*prove*"—know by personal experience—the beautiful and perfect scheme of holiness. The arrangement of the last clause in the original seems to require, as Dean Alford argues, the rendering, "What is the will of God,—the good, and acceptable, and perfect." In all these expressions, St. Paul has in view the whole compass of *moral rectitude*. He refers to the entire range of our duties, first of all, as enjoined by God, enforced by His "*will*" who is the Ruler of the universe, and all whose commands are binding on His creatures; and then he refers to the scheme of rectitude as, in itself, having these three features:—it is "*good*," essentially right, and calculated to promote universal order and happiness; it is "*acceptable*," the object of complacency to God, as well as enforced by His authority; and it is "*perfect*," being distinguished by a beautiful completeness, and providing in its general principles for every relation, and for every possible combination of circumstances.

Verse 3. *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to*

to every man that is among you, 'not to think of *himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think *soberly, according as God hath dealt ^kto every man the measure of faith.

† Prov. xxv. 27; Eccles. vii. 16; Rom. xi. 20. * Gr. to sobriety.
^k 1 Cor. xii. 7, 11; Ephes. iv. 7.

every man that is among you, not to think &c. Here the Apostle enters upon some of the particular duties of the Christian life. He addresses believers in relation to their intercourse with each other, and the discharge of their respective duties in the Church, warning them against those evils which would destroy the harmony of the Church, and paralyze its influence on the world, and pointing out the spirit and manner in which they should apply themselves to the work assigned to them.—It is instructive to observe how distinctly St. Paul affirms his *right* to issue *authoritative precepts*,—that right being derived from the apostleship with which he had been invested by the Lord Jesus, and the rich communication of the Holy Spirit which had accompanied his separation to it. It is instructive to mark, also, the emphatic manner in which he addresses his charge to *each individual* of the Church at Rome. “For *I say*, through the grace given unto me, to *every man* that is among you.” The authority which belonged to him as an Apostle of Christ gave him a right to admonish even the highest and most influential members of that Church, whose position and gifts tended to raise them, in their own estimation, far above their brethren; and his benevolent solicitude for the humbler members of the Church, who were exposed to the secret insinuation of the same inward evils, led him to press his charge also upon them. That charge is, that every man should form a *moderate estimate* of his own powers and

4. For 'as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office :

! 1 Cor. xii. 12 ; Ephes. iv. 16.

gifts, and should guard against the subtle pride which would lead him to think too highly of himself, and depreciate the excellencies and attainments of others. There is a peculiar force and beauty in the combination of words, in the original, to express this sentiment ; but it is scarcely possible to exhibit, in another language, their delicate shades of meaning. —The grand consideration by which the Apostle enforces this duty is, that the special gifts and qualifications of every Christian—gifts and qualifications that his *faith*, which is also the gift of God, prepares him to receive and exercise—are derived from above. The single thought, that we are dependent upon God for all spiritual good, might itself shut out boasting : but the Apostle connects with this the sentiment, that the grace of Christ, exhaustless in its riches, and varied in its communications, has imparted precious and invaluable gifts to our brethren around us. All this is *intimated* in the words, “ According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith ;” but the Apostle goes on, in the following verses, more distinctly and fully to unfold it.

Verses 4, 5. *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office : so we, being many, &c.* The comparison of the Church of Christ to the human body is one frequently found in the writings of St. Paul ; and it beautifully illustrates the relations of all Christ's people to Himself and to each other. It is introduced here to guard believers against an overweening estimate of their own gifts, and the assumption of a haughty superiority to their brethren ; and to admonish them of the *end* for which their respective gifts have been imparted, and to which

5. So *"we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

6. *"Having then gifts differing according to the*

m 1 Cor. x. 17 ; xii. 20, 27 ; Ephes. i. 23 ; iv. 25.

n 1 Cor. xii. 4 ; 1 Peter iv. 10, 11. *o* Verse 3.

they should be invariably directed. Just as the members of the human body have different offices and functions, and, in the right performance of these, mutually subserve each other's comfort ; even so individual Christians have different gifts, and are placed in different positions, that they may minister to each other's welfare. It is worthy of our attention, that the Apostle does not go back to our original brotherhood, as partakers of the same nature, derived from our common ancestor Adam. This, indeed, might well form a ground of appeal, more especially in relation to the duties which we owe to all men, even to those who stand aloof from our blessed Lord, and will not seek salvation through His blood. But the Apostle, in pleading with Christians as to their feelings towards each other, and their combined action in the Church, at once takes higher ground. We are "*one body in Christ.*" United to Him by faith, we share in the same exalted privileges, stand in the same relation to the Eternal Father, and have a common inward life imparted by the Holy Ghost. Hence we are "*members one of another ;*" and every Christian is bound to remember, that whatever gifts and attainments he may possess are not to be used for his own advantage merely, and still less for the purpose of selfish display, but rather for the advantage of his brethren, and the accomplishment by the Church, as a whole, of the great designs which it is called to fulfil.

Verse 6. *Having then gifts differing according to the grace*

grace that is given to us, whether ^p prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith ;

^p Acts xi. 27 ; 1 Cor. xii. 10, 28 ; xiii. 2 ; xiv. 1, 6, 29, 31.

that is given to us, &c. Here the Apostle proceeds to apply the principle which he had just affirmed to the officers and members of the Church, according to the gifts which they had received, and the services to which they were called. He begins with *the prophets*. From a comparison of other passages of his writings, especially 1 Cor. xii. 28, and Ephes. iv. 11, 12, we may infer that these stood next to the Apostles, and were among the *extraordinary* ministers given to the Church in the first ages. Some of them were occasionally enabled to predict future events, as Agabus, who foretold the approaching imprisonment of St. Paul ; (Acts xxi. 10, 11 ;) but their chief function seems to have been to declare and apply Christ's truth, (1 Cor. xiv. 3,) and in this exercise they were *often* favoured with a *special inspiration*. To them the Apostle's charge is, that they should exercise the gifts entrusted to them "according to the proportion of faith." Many have understood these words as implying that, in their statements of Christian truth and duty, they were to keep in view the *general scheme* which the gospel sets forth, and bring out each particular in its relation to that scheme. This idea is expressed in the phrase, "the analogy of faith ;" but it is now generally admitted, that the words in the original do not convey this import. The sentiment of St. Paul, as Bengel and others have pointed out, seems to be, that the prophets, in all their utterances, should speak only that which their faith distinctly embraced as belonging to the Divine message, and which, consequently, was to them a matter of profound conviction.

7. Or ministry, *let us wait on our ministering* : or
 † *he that teacheth, on teaching* ;

q Acts xiii. 1 ; Gal. vi. 6 ; Ephes. iv. 11 ; 1 Tim. v. 17.

Verses 7, 8. *Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering : or he that teacheth, on teaching ; or he that exhorteth, &c.* In the application of his general principle, St. Paul now adverts to several different *spheres of service* in the Church. He refers to *deacons*,—for there can be little question that the term *διακονία* should here be taken in its more special and restricted sense. The deacons had charge of the temporal affairs of the Church, and the distribution of its alms ; and they appear also to have rendered varied assistance to the pastors to whom the spiritual oversight of the flock was committed. Now the charge of St. Paul to these officers is, literally, that they should be “*in their deaconship*,” constantly regarding *their own special functions*, and seeking to discharge them with diligence and fidelity. A similar charge he addresses to *teachers*,—those whose office it was to unfold the entire scheme of truth, and to build up the Church in faith and holiness ; and to *exhorters*,—those who, in occasional addresses, sought to encourage their brethren to perseverance in the duties of the Christian life. To these he says, that “*he that teacheth*” should be “*in*” the work of “*teaching*,” and “*he that exhorteth*” should be “*in exhortation* :” his whole soul should be engaged in it, and he should apply himself sedulously and uniformly to the duties of his own particular office.—In the next place, the Apostle refers to “*him that giveth*,”—a phrase which some have understood of a distributor of alms subordinate to the deacon. But the word seems rather to refer to giving to others from our own substance ; and the exhortation may be properly understood as implying, that all

8. Or 'he that exhorteth, on exhortation ; 'he that
 || giveth, *let him do it* || with simplicity ; 'he that
 ruleth, with diligence ; he that sheweth mercy, "with
 cheerfulness.

r Acts xv. 32 ; 1 Cor. xiv. 3. s Matt. vi. 1, 2, 3. || Or, *imparteth*.
 || Or, *liberally* ; 2 Cor. viii. 2. t Acts xx. 28 ; 1 Tim. v. 17 ;
 Heb. xiii. 7, 24 ; 1 Peter v. 2. u 2 Cor. ix. 7.

Christians whose resources, through the bounty of Divine Providence, enabled them, in any degree, to contribute to the necessities of others, should do so "with *simplicity*,"—not showing unjust partiality, nor aiming at personal display, but simply seeking to please God in the faithful use of the talents confided to them, and to relieve, to the utmost possible extent, the distress that might be around them.—The Apostle then passes to those who had to *preside* over the Church, or over any special department of its work, or, it may be, over their own households ; and he exhorts all such to *diligence* and *earnestness*. They are not to consult their own ease, but to apply themselves assiduously to their special duties, looking after every interest committed to their care.—And, finally, he turns to those who, as *visitors of the sick*, or in other modes of Christian benevolence, sought to show mercy to the afflicted and sorrowful. These he encourages to a *holy cheerfulness* in their work. Flesh and blood would, indeed, sometimes shrink from the services which they have to render, and would shun the abodes of wretchedness which they have to seek out and to gladden by the manifestation of Christian sympathy ; but they are cheerfully to tread in the steps of their blessed Master, who "came to seek and to save that which was lost," and who voluntarily entered into the deepest sorrows of humanity.

9. **Let love be without dissimulation.* †*Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

α 1 Tim. i. 5; 1 Peter i. 22.

γ Ps. xxxiv. 14; xxxvi. 4; xcvi. 10; Amos v. 15.

Verse 9. *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.* Having dwelt on the spirit in which the members of the Church should exercise their different gifts, and discharge the duties of their respective offices, the Apostle now passes to other exhortations applicable to *their general intercourse with each other and with the world.* At the head of these he places, most appropriately, the charge, that their "*love*" should be "*without dissimulation.*" The principle of love—real, active, untiring benevolence to all mankind—is essential to the Christian character. But there is a danger lest, amidst the chilling influences of the world, this principle should lose its healthy vigour, and almost become extinct; even while, in order to appear consistent with our profession, we keep up the outward show of love, and do some things to which it might prompt us. Against this danger the Apostle warns us; and he calls upon us to preserve the principle of love in its *simplicity* and *purity*. But his words have a yet deeper significance, when they are combined with those that immediately follow; and it is worthy of attention that, in the original, the intimate connection between the two parts of this verse is more strongly marked than in our translation. The literal rendering is, "*Let love be without dissimulation; abhorring that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good.*" Many expositors regard the word "*evil*" as equivalent to *injurious*, and "*good*" as equivalent to *profitable* or *advantageous*; and consider that the charge of the Apostle is, in effect, that

10. * *Be kindly affectioned one to another* || with

* Heb. xiii. 1; 1 Peter i. 22; ii. 17; iii. 8; 2 Peter i. 7.

|| Or, *in the love of the brethren.*

our love to others should be sincere and pure, causing us at all times to shrink back from everything that would be injurious to them, and to pursue with constancy and firmness that which will promote their welfare. It may be questioned, however, whether the terms "abhorring" and "cleaving to" are those which the Apostle would have selected to express the course of conduct here indicated; while there is a special propriety in them when we understand the words "evil" and "good" as referring to the moral character of principles and actions, and regard St. Paul as enforcing a general habit of mind which must be associated with our love to our fellow-men, if it is to be "without dissimulation." Our love, he teaches us, must not lead us to disguise or pass over that which is morally evil in others; for then, indeed, it would be but the *semblance* of love. But, on the other hand, it should cause us to dwell with special interest and complacency on everything in the character of others that is lovely and good; and, viewing them with yet increased affection on account of their moral excellencies, we should seek to imbibe their spirit and tread in their footsteps. It is impossible to assign too great importance to the habit of mind thus indicated. That which is evil, with whatever embellishments it may be surrounded, should be the object of our settled and intense aversion: that which is good should be the object of our settled complacency and delight. We must hate sin *as sin*: we must love holiness *as holiness*. The cultivation of this state of mind will give a *healthy tone*

brotherly love ; " in honour preferring one another ;

11. Not slothful in business ; fervent in spirit ;
serving the Lord ;

a Phil. ii. 3 ; 1 Peter v. 5.

to our religion ; and, being combined with sincere love to all men, will enable us to present a living Christianity in its sterner, as well as in its milder and more attractive, aspects.

Verse 10. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love ; in honour preferring one another.* From the principle of love, regarded as comprehending all mankind, the Apostle naturally passes to that *peculiar attachment* which believers should cherish towards each other, as members of that new and sacred *brotherhood* of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head. This love is to resemble His own deep regard to His people, being founded on the common relation in which we stand to Him, and resulting from that common inward life which His Spirit infuses. And the charge of the Apostle is, that it should be *deep, tender, and unfailing* ; and, in particular, that it should exclude all *unhallowed rivalry*, and cause us to rejoice in conferring honour on our brethren. Such a love affords a striking illustration of the reality and power of Divine grace. It shows that that grace can correct the selfish tendencies of the human heart, and confer real dignity on the human character.

Verse 11. *Not slothful in business ; fervent in spirit ; serving the Lord.* There is an intimate and beautiful connection of thought between these exhortations and that of the preceding verse. To some it might appear that, if all ambitious feeling—all desire ourselves to rise to the highest eminence—is repressed, and if, in the place of this, there is a readiness to confer honour rather on our brethren, we shall be deprived of one great stimulus to active, zealous,

12. ^b Rejoicing in hope; ^c patient in tribulation;
^d continuing instant in prayer;

^b Luke x. 20; Rom. v. 2; xv. 13; Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4; 1 Thess. v. 16;
 Heb. iii. 6; 1 Peter iv. 13.

^c Luke xxi. 19; 1 Tim. vi. 11; Heb. x. 36; xii. 1; James i. 4; v. 7;
 1 Peter ii. 19, 20.

^d Luke xviii. 1; Acts ii. 42; xii. 5; Ephes. vi. 18; Col. iv. 2; 1 Thess. v. 17.

persevering effort. But the Apostle, without formally adverting to this objection, proceeds to exhort us to *earnest exertion*,—that exertion being grounded upon a holier principle, and sustained by a higher motive. Our earthly life, he reminds us, is a period of *service to the Lord Christ*, who justly claims our *warmest affection* and the *constant and earnest* putting forth of all our *energies*. We may well be content for others to rise above us, and yet retain an undiminished interest in the work of life, if we remember that Christ has assigned to us our respective spheres, and that in all we do we are serving Him. A few MSS. have *καρπῶ* instead of *Κυρίῳ*, so as to make the sentiment of the Apostle “serving,” or “improving, opportunity.” But the weight of authority is decidedly in favour of the received reading; and the idea which it suggests accords, as we have seen, with the general course of the Apostle’s reasoning.—It is important to observe that the term *σπουδῇ*, rendered “business,” must *not* be restricted to the *secular* engagements of Christians. Perhaps a more literal rendering would be, “In earnest effort not remiss; in spirit fervent; serving the Lord.” The first clause is comprehensive of all our active engagements, whether in the Church or in the world; while the second and third indicate the spirit which we should ever cultivate, and the object which we should ever keep in view.

Verse 12. *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; con-*

13. 'Distributing to the necessity of saints ; ^fgiven to hospitality.

e 1 Cor. xvi. 1 ; 2 Cor. ix. 1, 12 ; Heb. vi. 10 ; xiii. 16 ; 1 John iii. 17.
f 1 Tim. iii. 2 ; Titus i. 8 ; Heb. xiii. 2 ; 1 Peter iv. 9.

tinuing instant in prayer. Here St. Paul adverts to some of the *gracious principles* and *spiritual exercises* by which we are to be sustained in our career of active service to Christ under the varying circumstances of life. Our risen Lord has opened to us scenes of blessedness and glory, amidst which we are to dwell with Him for ever ; and His Spirit sent into our hearts is the "earnest" of this our glorious inheritance. It is our privilege, then, even to "*rejoice*" in the "*hope*" of the glory that awaits us ; and this hope may well cheer and animate us, amidst all the difficulties and discouragements of our probationary course. Even in the darkest hours of affliction and sorrow it need not fail us, but may sweetly commingle with that "*patience*"—that holy *fortitude*, and unwavering *submission* to the Divine will, combined with a *waiting* for the clearing up of the Divine plans respecting us—which also the Holy Ghost breathes into the believing mind. And, amidst all the changes of the Christian life, whether our path is one of brightness and joy, or is overshadowed by adversity and bereavement,—whether the joy of hope, or the calm submission of holy patience, predominates in our experience,—we are to "*continue instant in prayer.*" It is only by cultivating fellowship with God, and seeking continual supplies of His hidden strength, that we can retain the freshness of our piety, exult in the anticipation of heaven, or sustain the trials through which we may be called to pass, as we journey towards the land of rest.

Verse 13. *Distributing to the necessity of saints ; given*

14. *Bless them which persecute you : bless, and curse not.*

g Matt. v. 44 ; Luke vi. 28 ; xxiii. 34 ; Acts vii. 60 ; 1 Cor. iv. 12 ;
1 Peter ii. 23 ; iii. 9.

to hospitality. Here, again, we have to mark a beautiful transition of thought. The Apostle passes from the inward habits of piety, and the spiritual exercises by which our Christian graces are to be maintained, to the *practical development of love* in our outward life. Among the forms in which that principle is to manifest itself, he first mentions the care of the poor, and especially *the poor of the flock of Christ*. We should be ready, as God has given us ability and opportunity, ourselves to minister to their wants, making their case our own, and rejoicing to communicate to them of our substance. To *strangers*, also, we must extend the hand of welcome, thinking of those who have no home, and being ready to afford them hospitality, instead of shutting ourselves up within ourselves, and regarding only our own ease and comfort. Many expositors have properly called attention to the importance of the duty of hospitality, in the circumstances in which the early Churches were placed. Houses of entertainment were not then established ; and in times of persecution, it was imperative on all who loved Christ to entertain cheerfully and cordially those who had, for *His* sake, given up their own homes.

Verse 14. *Bless them which persecute you ; bless, and curse not.* Another development of the benignity of the Christian character is here brought out. The Apostle re-echoes the charge of our Lord, in His Sermon on the mount ; (Matt. v. 44 ;) and it seems indisputable that the very words of the Saviour were present to his mind. The

15. ^h Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16. ⁱ Be of the same mind one toward another.

^h 1 Cor. xii. 26.

ⁱ Rom. xv. 5; 1 Cor. i. 10; Phil. ii. 2; iii. 16; 1 Peter iii. 8.

Christian is to love even his enemies; and, instead of retaliating their injuries or reproaches, he is to use towards them the language of peace and kindness, and sincerely to seek their recovery and happiness. No recollection of wrong done to him is to induce him to close his heart against them, or to refrain from rendering them service.

Verse 15. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.* Here the Apostle refers to other modes in which the pure and genuine love of the Christian heart is to disclose itself. We are to *share the joys and sorrows* of our brethren in Christ, and indeed of any of our fellow-men with whom we are brought into intercourse. Instead of looking enviously upon the prosperity and happiness of others, we should rather feel as if their happiness was ours; and instead of turning away from the house of mourning, lest a degree of gloom should come over our own spirits, we should endeavour to enter into the sorrows of our fellow-men, that we may assist them to bear them. There is a peculiar charm in unaffected *sympathy*. It can lighten the heaviest burden, and irradiate for a while the darkest scenes of earth. And our sympathy may resemble, though but faintly, the sympathy of Him who passed through the deepest sorrows and greatest agitations of our humanity, that He might be "a merciful and faithful High Priest over the house of God,"—that, in every age, He might be the sympathising Friend and Brother of all His people.

Verse 16. *Be of the same mind one toward another.*

²Mind not high things, but ||condescend to men of low estate. ¹Be not wise in your own conceits.

k Ps. cxxxi. 1, 2; Jer. xlv. 5. || Or, *be contented with mean things.*

l Prov. iii. 7; xxvi. 12; Isa. v. 21; Rom. xi. 25.

Continuing his brief exhortations to the Roman Christians, the Apostle charges them to cultivate *harmony of sentiment*, and if, in anything left open by the law of Christ, they should differ from each other, still to cherish *mutual affection and confidence*. There were some questions, as we learn from a subsequent part of the Epistle, on which the members of the Church at Rome did actually differ; but the abounding of that love which the Spirit of Christ imparts would unite them in fraternal esteem, notwithstanding these minor diversities of thought and practice. Their common union with Christ, and their common devotion to Him, were a sufficient ground of deep mutual regard.

Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. In these precepts St. Paul touches that state of heart which so often leads to discord in the Church. There is a danger lest our minds should be set on "high things,"—delighting chiefly in the society of the rich and great, and earnestly seeking for ourselves the highest positions. There is a danger, too, lest we should indulge a lofty conceit of our own wisdom, dwelling with complacency on the strength of our natural powers, the soundness of our judgment, and the greatness of our intellectual attainments. But all this is contrary to the mind of Christ. As His people, we are to be "clothed with humility;" and, instead of aspiring to pre-eminence and distinction, we are to be anxious to serve Him in those spheres which His providence may assign to us. Nor should we fail to tread in His steps of *affectionate service* to

17. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

m Prov. xx. 22; Matt. v. 39; 1 Thess. v. 15; 1 Peter iii. 9.

n Rom. xiv. 16; 2 Cor. viii. 21.

the poor and humble. We should "*condescend* to men of low estate." The word which St. Paul uses in the original is very forcible and expressive. It implies that we should be willing to *go out of our way* to serve the poor,—that we should turn aside from our more pleasurable engagements to *go with them*, to evince our sympathy with them, and to succour them in their distresses. How lovely a temper of mind is this, and how strikingly does it evince the reality of a Divine power working in the soul! Did it but generally prevail among those who bear the name of Christ, how would the sufferings of our world be mitigated, and the several classes of society be linked together in harmony and love!

Verse 17. *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.* The Apostle now passes to the subject of the *retaliation of injuries*; and on this he chiefly dwells in the remaining exhortations of this chapter, though some of them have doubtless a wider application. He repeats, in substance, the charge of the Redeemer in His Sermon on the mount, (Matt. v. 38, 39,) and calls upon believers to repress the first emotions of revenge, and never to do harm to another because he has done harm to them. And he enforces this exhortation by the general consideration, that there rests upon believers a solemn obligation *to manifest to all men the moral loveliness of the Christian character*, and to take care that no action of theirs shall ever bring reproach on the name of Jesus. For a reference to the original will at once show, that this

18. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, ^olive peaceably with all men.

^o Mark ix. 50; Rom. xiv. 19; Heb. xii. 14.

is the import of the second precept of this verse. The word which we render "things honest" comprehends all actions, and all developments of character, that are *morally beautiful and good*; and the word "provide" expresses the *forethought*, the *earnest consideration*, with which we should apply ourselves to present to the world such a course of unblemished and attractive excellence. In this exhortation, also, the Apostle seems to have had in view the charge of our Lord:—"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.) It is easy to perceive the bearing of this *general* admonition on the particular duty with which the Apostle connects it. To give place to retaliation and revenge would tarnish our Christian profession, and would afford occasion to the men around us to say, and that justly, that we were even as others, and that all our pretensions to inward renewal were vain and futile.

Verse 18. *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.* The high and holy principles which keep us, as Christians, from retaliating injuries, will lead us also to cultivate *a love of peace*. All strife is alien from the mind that is at peace with God, and rejoices in the Saviour's love. The true Christian will never willingly engage in contention: "as much as lieth in him,"—as far as it depends on *his* bearing and conduct,—he will "live peaceably with all men." But the Apostle qualifies his injunction with the words, "If it be possible,"—thus intimating, that the conduct of others may, at times, interrupt and destroy that peace which the Christian seeks to

19. Dearly beloved, ^pavenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, ^qVengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

^p Lev. xix. 18; Prov. xxiv. 29; verse 17.

^q Dent. xxxii. 35; Heb. x. 30.

promote. Nor is this the only reference of these significant words. Fidelity to Christ may, in certain supposable circumstances, require His people to stand forth, earnestly to maintain His truth, and to enter their protest against the errors that impugn it. There are principles which we must not yield; though even when we contend for these, it should not be in a spirit of unhallowed strife, but rather with mingled firmness and love. This charge of the Apostle naturally recalls some of our Lord's weighty injunctions in His Sermon on the mount, (Matt. v. 23—25,) and, in particular, His gracious declaration and promise, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God." (Matt. v. 9.)

Verse 19. *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance &c.* The Apostle resumes, in this verse, the particular topic of the retaliation of injuries, and urges the grand consideration which should cause every Christian instantly to shrink back from it. He reminds us, that *there will be retribution* for human conduct,—that the Divine government, indeed, proceeds upon this principle; but he calls upon us to *stand aside* and *await* the retribution which God, in His own time, will inflict upon all who have practised evil, and outraged the rights of others, seeking, meanwhile, if it may be, to bring them to repentance. It is a great and solemn truth, that it belongs to God to render retribution, and thus to guard and uphold the moral order of the universe. His

20. "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

r Exod. xxiii. 4, 5; Prov. xxv. 21, 22; Matt. v. 44.

omniscient Mind is not disturbed by selfish irritation, nor misled by partial views of individual character and conduct. He, too, is possessed of infinite resources, and His hand can reach every transgressor, however high his earthly position. But the anticipation of that day when He "will render to every man according to his works," may well inspire a salutary fear into our hearts; and, remembering our past sins, we should be anxious that even our greatest enemies should be brought to repentance and faith in Jesus, and thus escape the ruin that awaits them.

Verse 20. *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing &c.* These words are taken from Prov. xxv. 21, 22. Their precise significance has been matter of dispute; but the general spirit of the exhortation is sufficiently obvious. In view of the ultimate retribution which awaits us all, we should seek to recover even our enemies to a course of rectitude; and this can be most effectually done by acts of *kindness*. More especially, if they who have injured us should ever be brought into circumstances of suffering and want, we should gladly seize the opportunity of ministering to their necessities. Such a course of action will touch their conscience, if anything will; it will recall their unkind and unjust conduct towards us; and it may, under the operation of Divine grace, lead them to repentance. And although their first emotions, when they are aroused to reflection, may be *painful*,—painful as the sensation produced by the

21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

application of heated coals to the head,—yet the ultimate effect will be *salutary*, and our Christian benevolence will find in their moral recovery its noblest triumphs and its highest joy.

Verse 21. *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* With these forcible and comprehensive words St. Paul closes his exhortations to repress all resentful feeling, and to manifest kindness to our enemies. The man who yields to the spirit of revenge is “overcome of evil;” he loses his self-control, and becomes the prey of a malignant passion; but he who meets evil with good triumphs over it by the grace of God, and in many instances subdues even his enemies, leading them to Christ for salvation, and thus changing the current of their affections, and altering their entire character.

CHAPTER XIII.

1. LET every soul ^abe subject unto the higher^a Titus iii. 1 ; 1 Peter ii. 13.

CHAPTER XIII.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

THE Apostle now passes to the duties of Christians towards the *civil authorities* under which, in the providence of God, they may live. He dwells on the truth, that civil government is an *ordinance of God*, and adverts to the *benefits* which result from it, since it is necessary both to guard the rights of individuals and to maintain the order of society. Having alluded incidentally to the principles which should govern magistrates in the exercise of the authority confided to them, he inculcates on subjects the duties of obedience,—of the cheerful payment of tribute,—and of outward respect and honour. These duties he connects with the *general* injunction, that we should render to all men that which they may justly claim at our hands; and then he dwells on *one obligation* which can never cease,—even that we should *love* all our fellow-men; and he shows that the principle of love, maintained in its fulness and power, will keep us from invading any of the rights of others, and lead us faithfully to discharge all our particular duties towards them.

The cultivation of such a state of mind, and the observance of such a line of conduct, he then enforces by a reference to the *position* of believers, as already in the *dawn* of a higher, and purer, and more blissful life. Awaiting the approach of “the day,” when our salvation will be

powers. For ^bthere is no power but of God: the powers that be are ||ordained of God.

^b Prov. viii. 15, 16; Daniel ii. 21; iv. 32; John xix. 11.

|| Or, *ordered*.

consummated, we are placed under a solemn obligation to renounce everything that is polluting,—to cultivate the graces which are essential to our defence in our spiritual conflicts,—to regulate and control our inferior appetites, so that they shall consist with holiness,—and, above all, to seek a perfect conformity to the character of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Verse 1. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: &c.* It is the opinion of some expositors, that there were *special reasons* for these exhortations to the Roman Christians, arising from their being in danger of mistaken views of the nature of Christ's kingdom, and its relation to the civil power. This may have been the case: but, apart from any such reasons, these exhortations are necessary to the beautiful *completeness* of the moral precepts of Christianity. It was eminently fitting that the Apostle, in a series of minute directions as to the Christian life, should advert to the relation in which men stand to constituted civil authority,—should remind believers that the duties of that relation are binding upon *them* equally with others,—and should point out the high and sacred grounds on which civil government rests. The considerations brought forward in this verse are very comprehensive. The position which St. Paul wished to place vividly before the Roman Christians was, that *civil government is an ordinance of God*; but he includes this in the more general assertion that “there

2. Whosoever therefore resisteth 'the power, re-

c Titus iii. 1.

is *no power but of God*,"—that the authority which belongs to any man, or, indeed, to any creature, in virtue of *any* relation which he may sustain, is derived from HIM who has constituted these relations. The application of this principle to the case in question is obvious. It is a part of the Divine plan, that men should live together in *society*, under the control of *laws* which *magistrates* should administer, and the penalties of which magistrates should have power to enforce. Civil government, in some form, is essential to the peace and welfare of communities. Without it the dearest rights of individuals would be imperilled, and might at any time be invaded by those who possessed the requisite amount of force. Without it ample scope would be given for private retaliation, and for collisions of fierce and deadly passions. The evils of a state of anarchy affect every relation of life, and prevent all advancement in civilisation and comfort. And no thoughtful man can imagine that Almighty God designed men to live together without laws to define their rights, and guard their dearest and most sacred interests, or without magistrates to administer and enforce these laws.—From this general principle the Apostle passes to the case of *existing civil authorities*; and he affirms that these "are ordered of God,"—they have place in the arrangements of His providence. He does not claim Divine right for any particular form of civil government as distinguished from others. His words clearly shut out any such sentiment, and imply, that the existing form of government in any country has been established under the permission, at least, of Divine Providence; so that, in all ordinary cases, it is the duty of Christians to yield obedience to the ruling power. To the

sisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

few exceptional cases which may arise, the Apostle does not advert, leaving them to be dealt with on the *special grounds* which other great principles supply.

Verse 2. *Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they &c.* Here St. Paul states the *inference* which legitimately follows from the position which he had just laid down. Contumacious resistance to magistrates, and the refusal to submit to the restraints of civil government, involve resistance to a Divine appointment, and must subject the person guilty of it to condemnation before God. This conclusion, stated in this general form, is unquestionable. But there may arise a few cases in which, while magistracy, as such, is honoured, and its just claims are dutifully acknowledged, it may be the duty of a Christian not to yield to particular requirements. If, for instance, a civil magistrate, going altogether beyond his province, should enjoin on us certain religious services from which our conscience revolted, or should forbid us to worship God according to our settled convictions of what is right, a higher duty comes in to set aside the demand of obedience to such a magistrate. In such a case Christians ought to be prepared to say, respectfully but firmly, as the Apostles said when charged by the Sanhedrim not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, "We ought to obey God rather than men." God has claims, immediately and directly, on the worship and obedience of the human spirit, which cannot be set aside, and which justly take precedence of all other claims.—The conduct proper to Christians when a country is torn with revolutionary movements, involves considerations of far greater difficulty;

3. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? *do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:*

d 1 Peter ii. 14; iii. 13.

and so much depends on the circumstances of each case that no direction which shall be absolutely binding can be laid down. One thing is clear, that it is only in *extreme* cases that any deviation from the general duty of obedience to the existing civil authorities can be right. The ruling power must altogether fail to discharge its proper functions, —even to encourage and protect that which is right and good, and to restrain and punish evil-doers; it must be guilty of great, obvious, glaring oppression,—oppression which shall be felt by all, or nearly all, so that the ends of magistracy are frustrated rather than secured; before a people can be at all justified in attempting a revolution. That there have been such exceptional cases, in the history of some nations, cannot be denied. Happily, since the crisis of 1688, our own land has enjoyed a combination of liberty and order; and at this day we prove that obedience to law, and dutiful submission to constituted authority, are consistent with true freedom, and tend to promote the general welfare and prosperity.

Verse 3. *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then &c.* In this and the following verse St. Paul, without *formally* addressing exhortations to the governing power,—which, in a letter to the Church at Rome, written under the circumstances then existing, would scarcely have been appropriate,—*alludes*, in general terms, to the *duties of rulers*, and to the *ends* which they should ever keep in view. Magistrates are to encourage

4. For he is the minister of God to thee for good.
But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he

right actions; and to restrain and punish those which involve injury to others, or which are opposed to the order and welfare of society. Civil government, according to the design of God, is to throw a shield over the innocent and deserving, and to protect them from lawless violence. To the upright man, therefore, it can present no terror, but only hold forth encouragement and inspire confidence. If, in any case, the power of constituted authority is directed against the good and virtuous,—this is a fearful abuse of a sacred trust, and a flagrant insult to Him who ruleth over all.

Verse 4. *For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; &c.* Here the Apostle, still making prominent the truth, that magistracy is an ordinance of God, so that they who are invested with it have to execute His will, and to apply judicially the great principles which He has laid down as to the duties of men towards each other, goes on to affirm, that the office of the magistrate imposes on him the *duty* of inflicting punishment on evil-doers, so far as is necessary to uphold the rights and guard the interests of society; and that he is, or should be, invested with sufficient power to do this, that power extending, in certain cases, even to the taking away of life. No language can be more emphatic than that in which St. Paul affirms the *delegated* character of the authority with which the magistrate is clothed. To the man who seeks faithfully to discharge all his duties to his fellow-men, he is "*the minister of God for good*;" to the man who invades the rights of his fellows, he is "*the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath.*" It is

beareth not the sword in vain : for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil.

important, also, to mark the depth of meaning in the brief statement,—“*he beareth not the sword in vain.*” It is thought that these words contain an allusion to the circumstance, that the Roman Emperors, and some of the higher magistrates under them, wore a dagger as the symbol of their power over life. But, apart from any such allusion, they are full of instruction. For not only do they imply the possession by the sovereign authority of a power even to take away life in those cases in which the law of God *requires* it; they teach us also, that the magistrate is *bound* to guard the rights of the innocent, by the actual infliction of appropriate punishment on the wrong-doer, and that to omit to do so would be *unfaithfulness* to his high and sacred trust. In view of this declaration, is it too much to affirm, that the sovereign power ought not to shrink from inflicting, in the case of *murder*, the extreme penalty of the law, since God Himself has said, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed : for in the image of God made He man” ? It would be a false delicacy, and a real trifling with the sanctity of human life, to spare the life of the murderer who, in cold blood, has hurried into eternity some unsuspecting victim, some one, perhaps, that, a few hours before, was light-hearted and cheerful, and from whose mind nothing was further off than the anticipation of brutal violence and a painful death. Our sympathy should be with the innocent and virtuous ; and a holy indignation, free from the admixture of selfish irritation, should fill our minds, as we reflect on the murderer’s cruelty and baseness.

5. Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, ^f but also for conscience sake.

6. For for this cause pay ye tribute also : for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

e Eccles. viii. 2. f 1 Peter ii. 19.

Verse 5. *Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.* Such an appeal as this naturally follows from the premisses which the Apostle had laid down. If civil government is of God,—if the authority which the magistrate wields is delegated by Him, and that for the purpose of guarding the dearest interests of human society,—then it becomes a matter of *conscience*, with all who are really God's people, to bow to constituted authority, and to sustain its exercise. To despise or neglect it, and to claim an unchecked license of personal action, would not only expose us to merited punishment, but would be a violation of the very first principles of Christian duty.

Verse 6. *For for this cause pay ye tribute also : for they are God's ministers, &c.* From the duty of submission and obedience, the Apostle passes to that of the *pecuniary support* of the civil power ; resting this, as he had done the other, on the character which magistrates sustain as "ministers of God," invested by Him with a delegated authority, and upholding the great principles which He has laid at the basis of human society. Such a consideration would prompt Christians to a faithful and even cheerful payment of the taxes lawfully imposed on them. For civil government supposes a public revenue by which it is sustained. The magistrate must be surrounded with a sufficient force to enable him to protect the innocent and punish the guilty. And they who are *set apart* to the

7. *Render therefore to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour.*

g Matt. xxii. 21 ; Mark xii. 17 ; Luke xx. 25.

service of the state, and who cannot, therefore, employ their talents and resources for the direct benefit of themselves and their families, are justly entitled to an honourable maintenance.—It is instructive to observe how the principles of Christianity elevate all the ordinary duties of life. Even the payment of tribute is connected with a recognition of God, and derives from such a recognition a higher character than it could otherwise have, while it involves a richer and purer satisfaction.

Verse 7. *Render therefore to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; &c.* Here St. Paul enlarges on the duty which he had just enjoined, connecting it with a general principle of the widest application. That principle is, that we should, with unswerving fidelity and constancy, give to every man that which he may justly claim at our hands, whether from the relations in which he stands to us, or from any transactions which have passed between him and us. It is essential to the Christian character to maintain a sacred regard to *duty*,—to observe that which is *just* and *right* ; and no man who breathes the spirit of the Lord Jesus can trifle with his obligations to others, or act simply with a reference to his own comfort and advantage. The first term which the Apostle uses in tracing the application of this principle,—“tribute,” or “tax,”—refers, as Dean Alford observes, to *direct* payments for state purposes ; the second is equivalent to “custom,” or “toll,” levied on articles of merchandise. The next clause, “fear to whom fear,” sets

8. Owe no man anything, but to love one another :
for ^hhe that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

^h Verse 10; Gal. v. 14; Col. iii. 14; 1 Tim. i. 5; James ii. 8.

forth the feelings with which we should regard those who are invested with power over us,—a profound reverence for their office, blended with the consciousness that, if we are guilty of doing wrong, we shall come under the penalty which they are empowered to inflict. The last clause, “honour to whom honour,” has a wider range of meaning. It calls upon us to treat with outward deference and respect those who, in the providence of God, are placed in the higher and more influential positions of human society. The thoughtful Christian will shrink back from every offensive violation of decorum. He will, indeed, “honour all men;” he will treat even the humblest and poorest with respect, recognising the value, the transcendent importance, of our common human nature. And he will recognise, in his whole deportment, the claims of the higher relations and offices of human life. Without abandoning his self-respect, or ceasing to maintain his own legitimate independence, he will yet treat with deference and honour all who are invested with authority by the arrangements of God,—thus acknowledging Him who is the Fountain of our being, and on whom all the varied interests of human society are dependent.

Verse 8. *Owe no man anything, but to love one another : for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.* St. Paul now applies the general principle, that we should “render to all their dues,” to our transactions and intercourse with each other in the ordinary affairs of life. He calls upon Christians to pay their just debts, and to avoid contracting debts without a reasonable probability of discharging them.

9. For this, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not

‡ Exod. xx. 13, &c.; Dent. v. 17, &c.; Matt. xix. 18.

Nor is this all. His words imply, that *we should leave no obligation undischarged*,—that we should apply ourselves to meet every claim that may justly be made upon us by any person whatever. And then, with exquisite propriety, he intimates that there is one claim which can never be so met as to cease,—the claim of *love*. For the relation which subsists between us as fellow-men imposes on us the obligation of mutual kindness; and it is the principle of love, leading us not only to regard the rights of others as sacred and inviolable, but making us anxious, also, to promote their real and permanent welfare, which will insure our obedience to the particular precepts of the law.

Verse 9. *For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, &c.* In this and the following verses, St. Paul develops the sentiment which he had just affirmed, that "he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." He shows that those commandments of the Decalogue which relate to our duties to our fellow-men may all be resolved into the one precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Thus he re-echoes the declaration of our Lord, that, while the first of all the commandments is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," the second, which "is like unto it," is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and that "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." It is important to observe, how earnestly St. Paul who, in the former part of this Epistle, had set forth the gratuitous character of our justification, and the believer's death to the law,—his freedom from its

bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet ; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, ^tThou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

k Lev. xix. 18 ; Matt. xxii. 39 ; Mark xii. 31 ; Gal. v. 14 ; James ii. 8.

condemning grasp, in virtue of his sharing in the death of Jesus,—now enforces *the practical observance of the moral law, as binding on every true Christian*, and as that to which the great principle of love will naturally lead. And it is instructive also to note the distinct and unequivocal manner in which he recognises the ten commandments delivered on mount Sinai, as of permanent validity and obligation. While the ceremonial injunctions of the Mosaic economy were suited only to a preparatory condition of the Church, and the political regulations given to the Israelites were binding only on them as a nation, the Decalogue rests on the essential relations which subsist between God and mankind, and between the members of the human family towards each other. The ten commandments belong to that “law” which our Lord came not to annul but to *complete and perfect*. Even the Sabbatic institution, while the particular day of holy rest is changed to mark the accomplishment of our Lord’s redeeming work, and His rest from the shame and sorrow of His great mediatorial undertaking,—and while its spiritual and joyous character is more clearly indicated by the qualifying principles which our Lord has affirmed, and which His own practice illustrated,—remains, as a precious gift from God to men, calling them to special communion with the unseen, and guarding the poor and unprotected from continuous and exhausting toil.

Verse 10. *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour : therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* This is the consideration

10. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore 'love is the fulfilling of the law.

11. And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time ^mto awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed.

l Matt. xxii. 40; verse 8.

m 1 Cor. xv. 34; Ephes. v. 14; 1 Thess. v. 5, 6.

alleged to prove, that the principle of love, maintained in its fulness and power, will necessarily lead to a uniform and constant observance of the precepts of the law. Those precepts guard the *rights* of men; and any violation of them would involve an infringement of those rights, and an utter disregard of the interests and happiness of our fellows. But love shrinks from everything that would be injurious to others. It prompts us to seek their real welfare: and to trifle with their just claims, or to invade their acknowledged rights, is a procedure which we cannot but view with abhorrence, while love holds the dominion of our souls.

Verse 11. *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: &c.* Here there is a beautiful transition of thought. The Apostle enforces his exhortations by a reference to the position of believers in relation to the brighter scenes which already dawn upon them. His address is directed, not to those who sleep in the insensibility of sin, and who need to be aroused that they may seek the mercy of God in Christ, but to those who have already believed, and who look forward to the consummated salvation which is assured to them in the Lord Jesus. He marks distinctly the exercise of *faith* in Christ as an important fact in our religious history. Receiving Him, we are introduced to a new relation to God and a new

12. The night is far spent, the day is at hand:

spiritual state; and the hope of eternal life cheers us amidst the gloom, and sorrow, and conflicts, of our probationary course. We now anticipate "salvation,"—the higher life with Christ, free from all possibility of falling, upon which we shall enter when He summons us from earth, and that yet more glorious state, when our entire nature shall share His triumph, and when our deliverance from all the consequences of sin shall be complete and eternal. To that "salvation," the Apostle reminds us, we are drawing nearer and yet nearer, while we abide in Christ, and live and walk in the Spirit. Its holy light already breaks in upon us; and it becomes us, "knowing the *season*," at which we have arrived, and the prospects that are before us, to guard against all spiritual drowsiness, and, instead of abandoning ourselves to the influences of earth, or sinking down into a state of worldly repose, to cultivate a watchful and earnest spirit, and to stand habitually prepared for the coming of our Lord, and our introduction to His glorious presence.

Verse 12. *The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, &c.* The Apostle here lingers on the beautiful metaphor which he had just employed, and enlarges on the duties which this view of the believer's position suggests. We are in *the dawn* of a bright and eternal day. The shadows of our present state are passing away, and will soon give place to the unclouded sunlight of the Saviour's presence. Our earthly life, with its lower occupations and interests, is as "the night." If, indeed, those interests engrossed our souls, so that we were "children of the night," our prospects of the future would be dark indeed. But it is not so. We belong to "the day;"—we await, with holy desire and expectation, that

*let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and
 *let us put on the armour of light.

13. ^pLet us walk || honestly, as in the day; ^onot in

* Ephes. v. 11; Col. iii. 8. o Ephes. vi. 13; 1 Thess. v. 8.

^p Phil. iv. 8; 1 Thess. iv. 12; 1 Peter ii. 12. || Or, *decently*.

q Prov. xxiii. 20; Luke xxi. 34; 1 Peter iv. 3.

higher state in which the light of truth, and purity, and joy, shall be unclouded. That state is "at hand;" we have risen from the couch of slumber to prepare for it; and we should, therefore, put far away from us everything that is unsuited to it, and seek to be clothed upon with all those graces which will prepare us for its engagements and pleasures. Such is the exhortation of the Apostle. We are to "cast off *the works of darkness*;"—to renounce and watch against everything that is contrary to the purity of God, everything that will not bear to be placed in the light of His presence, but which belongs rather to the realm of sin and woe, and which needs to be enveloped in darkness to obscure its real character. And we are to "put on *the armour of light*;"—we are to cherish those graces of the Spirit which, while they evince their own heavenly origin and character, contribute to our defence in the spiritual conflicts in which we are now engaged, and prepare us for the light and joy of the Redeemer's presence. These graces the Apostle beautifully sets forth in Ephesians vi. 13—17, where he calls upon Christians to take unto themselves "the whole armour of God," that they may triumph in the Christian conflict, and stand, at last, partakers of the Saviour's victory.

Verse 13. *Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, &c.* St. Paul now amplifies his exhortation to practical holiness, and points out particular

rioting and drunkenness, 'not in chambering and wantonness, 'not in strife and envying.

14. But 'put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and

r 1 Cor. vi. 9; Ephes. v. 5. s James iii. 14.

t Gal. iii. 27; Ephes. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10.

evils which Christians must repudiate and avoid. We are to "walk *honestly*, as in the day,"—to maintain the *holy dignity* and *decorum* suited to our position and hopes, "living," as it has been beautifully expressed, "through the effectual grace of God, under the light of a present heaven; under the eye of HIM whose presence already throws the light of day around our souls."—And then we are to maintain a *rigid control* over our *animal passions*, and to guard against those *excesses* which would dishonour the Christian name. With equal solicitude must we watch against every *spiritual evil*, and especially against those which are directly contrary to holy love. Never must we give place to "strife and envying." Depraved self-love, unchecked by any nobler principle, and thus degenerating into intense selfishness, would naturally make us envious of the advantages, or the success, or the honour, of others, and would thus dispose us to party-spirit and bitter contention. But against all this the Christian must habitually watch. His character is to reflect the purity and benignity which appeared in his Lord and Head; and in all his deportment and conduct he is to be a pattern of self-control and unaffected kindness.

Verse 14. *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.* The first clause of this verse forms the crowning exhortation of the Apostle,—that which presents to us the loftiest view of the practical holiness which becomes the

*make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

u Gal. v. 16 ; 1 Peter ii. 11.

Christian profession. We are to be like Christ. For in His character all graces meet. He stands as the perfect model of human virtues, while the softened lustre of His Divine glories gives to those virtues a higher sacredness and a peculiar charm. But it is not a bare outward imitation of the Saviour to which the Apostle here refers. The Christian covenant provides for the actual communication to us of the mind of Christ ; for the Holy Spirit, leading us to Him for salvation, becomes to us the Source of a new inward life, and brings us into vital fellowship with our Lord. And in this process we are not merely passive. We cherish the hallowing grace of the Spirit ; and, constantly regarding the Lord Jesus as our pattern, as well as the ground of our hopes, we apply ourselves to the maintenance and development of the graces which appeared in Him in their perfect loveliness.—While we are intent on this, we shall not “make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Our animal appetites, instead of being fostered and pampered, are to be kept under strict control, and to be subordinated to the higher interests which, as Christians, we have to secure, and the higher pleasures which we are called to enjoy. It would be unworthy of us to direct our solicitude to the attainment of animal gratifications, and to make sedulous provision for the pleasing of the flesh. While we receive with gratitude, and enjoy with moderation, the temporal and domestic comforts which God may vouchsafe to us, let us be intent on the higher satisfactions, and the holier exercises, which the service of Christ involves.

CHAPTER XIV.

1. HIM that ^ais weak in the faith receive ye, but

^a Rom. xv. 1, 7; 1 Cor. viii. 9, 11; ix. 22.

CHAPTER XIV.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

IN unfolding the duties of Christians, St. Paul now adverts to the feelings which they should maintain, and the course of conduct which they should pursue, towards each other, in relation to *things left open by the law of Christ*, and respecting which they might innocently differ. Instead of seeking to establish a strict uniformity of outward observance, he calls upon the Roman Christians to cultivate *mutual affection and forbearance*. He reminds them of their *individual responsibility* to the Lord Jesus, and of the awful presumption involved in rejecting any one whom "God has received;" he maintains the right and duty of every man to follow his own *conscientious convictions*, after having sought with diligence and candour to ascertain the right path; and he shows how even contrary usages, if they involve no violation or neglect of a Divine precept, may be blended with the great Christian principle of *unreserved devotedness to the Lord Jesus*. On this principle he dwells with holy earnestness; connecting it with our Lord's mediatorial sovereignty, and with the judicial function which He will at last exercise.

Having thus laid down principles which sufficiently guarded the individual liberty of Christians in things which are in themselves indifferent, the Apostle considers the questions which threatened to disturb the Roman

|| not to doubtful disputations.

|| Or, *not to judge his doubtful thoughts.*

Church from other points of view. He gives prominence to *the law of love*; and he charges those who were strong to regard the conscientious scruples of their brethren, and not to encourage them, by their conduct, to do that which, with their views, would be to them sinful. He adverts to the comparatively *unimportant character* of the things in question, which indeed sink into insignificance when placed beside those which are essential to the subjects of Christ's kingdom. And then he charges all believers to follow after the things which conduce to peace and mutual edification,—to be willing to sacrifice their own inclinations rather than lead others into sin,—and, while maintaining their individual liberty in Christ, to abstain from any conduct which might stimulate another to do violence to his convictions of duty, and thus incur guilt before God.

Verse 1. *Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.* In entering upon the discussion which occupies this chapter and part of the next, St. Paul, first of all, commends those believers who had not yet risen above the prejudices of their former state, and whose apprehensions of the Christian scheme in its comprehensive and spiritual character were imperfect and feeble, to the affectionate regard of their brethren whose views were more expanded, and whose Christian principles were more established. He recognises the persons to whom he alludes as “weak in the faith;” but he calls upon the Church to “receive them,”—to give them the right hand of fellowship, and in the most open and cordial manner to acknowledge them as brethren. Such an acknowledgment, too, was *not*

2. For one believeth that ^hhe may eat all things : another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

δ Verse 14 ; 1 Cor. x. 25 ; 1 Tim. iv. 4 ; Titus i. 15.

to be the prelude to disputes designed to settle the points on which the individuals in question entertained scruples. Those scruples were to be treated with respect, and allowed to influence the conduct of those who held them ; while the law of love and of paramount devotion to the Lord Jesus was to bind the whole Christian community together, enabling it to present to the world the novel but attractive spectacle of an essential unity amidst outward diversities of observance and practice.

Verse 2. *For one believeth that he may eat all things : another, who is weak, eateth herbs.* Here St. Paul adverts to one particular in reference to which a difference might exist, and indeed did actually exist, among the members of the early Churches. Some, while receiving the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, and sincerely committing their souls to Him alone for acceptance and salvation, adhered to the minuter usages of Jewish life, and scrupled to partake of certain kinds of food. Among the believing Israelites dwelling in heathen countries there were those who, fearful lest some ceremonial defilement should be connected with the flesh of the animals offered for food, abstained altogether from such food, and confined themselves to "herbs." On the other hand, they who had been won to Christ from heathenism, and who were fully established in the truths, that a believing reception of Him is the one condition of acceptance with God, and that unreserved self-surrender to Him constitutes the essence of Christian obedience, had no sympathy with these Jewish peculiarities. They took a wider view of the design of the Christian economy,—they

3. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth

thought of it as designed to comprehend men of all nations and of all climates in the enjoyment of spiritual blessings, upon a condition eminently simple,—and they deemed it unreasonable that they should abstain from certain kinds of food which the law of Christ did not forbid. But this diversity of opinion and practice was in danger of inducing painful and injurious collisions; and against such collisions the Apostle now warns the Roman believers. It is instructive to observe in how different a manner he treats the conscientious scruples of the persons here referred to, from that in which he deals, in some others of his Epistles, with the efforts of Judaizing teachers to *enforce* circumcision and the observance of the ritual law as *essential to salvation*. *This* he regarded as a *fearful heresy*,—one which affected the glory of the Redeemer, set aside the exclusive and unfailing efficacy of His sacrifice, and denied the doctrine of gratuitous justification through faith in Him. He denounced it, therefore, in the most solemn and impressive language,—warning professors of the Name of Christ that if their trust was placed partly on Him, and partly on the ceremonial observances of the law, they could not be saved. How earnestly, for instance, does he expostulate with the Galatians:—"Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you *are justified by the law*; ye are *fallen from grace*." (Gal. v. 2—4.) And yet, within the compass of a few verses, he intimates that, if circumcision were placed on a different ground, if it were treated *not* as a *necessary* thing, but as an *indifferent* one, it would not

not; and 'let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

c Col. ii. 26.

invalidate a man's Christian character;—"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." (Verse 6.)

Verse 3. *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not &c.* This admonition touches the evils which, in the present imperfect state of our nature, were likely to arise from the diversity of practice to which the Apostle had just adverted. They who held high views of their liberty in Christ were in danger of *despising* those who continued to submit to the minuter restraints of Jewish life; and these last were in equal danger of *condemning* their brethren who asserted their freedom, as if they were claiming an unwarrantable license of action. Both these states of mind were wrong; and the Apostle strongly felt that the indulgence of them would impair the true unity of the Church, and interfere with the progress of Christ's cause. In pleading with those who censured their brethren for disregarding the distinctions of food, St. Paul first lays stress on the consideration, that "*God had received them.*" An important principle is here suggested,—that nothing which is consistent with a man's being accepted of God can justify us in refusing to recognise him as a Christian brother. To do so would be, in fact, *to reflect on God*,—to impeach the correctness of His judgment, and the wisdom of His arrangements. Obvious as this principle is, it is to be feared that it has been too often forgotten amidst the controversies which have agitated the Church. Its distinct recognition would greatly tend to promote that brotherly love which is a

4. 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up : for God is able to make him stand.

d James iv. 12.

distinguishing feature of the Christian temper, and which evinces the loveliness and power of the religion of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 4. *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up : &c.* Here the Apostle pursues the train of thought on which he had just entered ; and dwells on the awful presumption of any man sitting in judgment on his fellows, so as to condemn them for that which the law of Christ has not forbidden. He is our Master and Lord : by His precepts we are bound ; to Him must we render our account ; and by His sentence we must, at last, stand or fall. It is not for some fellow-man to add to His injunctions,—to bind that which He has not bound,—and then to sit in judgment upon us according to the standard which he himself may choose to set up. This would be to intrude into the province of Him to whom only we owe *spiritual* allegiance, and who only can issue authoritative precepts. The diversities of outward observance which the Apostle had in view were such as might consist with the cordial acceptance of the law of Christ, and sincere devotion to His cause. This is clearly *the test* to which we should ever bring our practices. There must be no trifling with any commandment of the Lord Jesus, no allowance of anything which He has forbidden ; but if only this is secured, we may, at least, claim not to be condemned, or harshly censured, by our fellow-Christians from whom we may

5. 'One man esteemeth one day above another :

e Gal. iv. 10; Col. ii. 16.

differ in those things which Christ has left *open*. Nay more; we may humbly look for the Divine approval, and for Divine succour in all our conflicts, so that they shall issue in our perfect victory: "Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." If we continue to rely on the Lord Jesus, and seek at all times to do His will,—if, too, in those things in which we may differ from some of our fellow-Christians, we sincerely desire to know the truth, and to follow the path of duty,—God will not forsake us, but will, in answer to our prayers, uphold us in every trial, and own us, at last, as His.

Verse 5. *One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.* St. Paul now instances another particular in relation to which diversity of sentiment and practice existed among the Roman Christians. Those who adhered to Jewish usages still observed certain seasons which they had been accustomed to honour, as possessing a peculiar sacredness and dignity; while the Gentile believers disregarded these seasons, esteeming every day as consecrated to Christ. At the first view, this statement of the Apostle might seem to imply that even the observance of a Sabbath is optional; but the day of holy rest is distinguished, we conceive, from the days of which St. Paul here speaks, since it was not a peculiarity of the Jewish economy, but was instituted by God *for mankind*, and that even while man stood in innocence and purity. "The Sabbath was made *for man*; and not man for the Sabbath." Then, too, the observance of the Sabbath is placed in the Decalogue, among the great moral precepts of Jehovah;

another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be || fully persuaded in his own mind.

6. He that *f* || regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto

|| Or, *fully assured.* *f* Gal. iv. 10. || Or, *observeth.*

and that summary of the Divine requirements is again and again recognised by our Lord and His apostles. We conceive that it was His will, that His own resurrection-day—the first day of the week—should be observed by all His people, and should form the Christian Sabbath; while the new life which His Spirit breathes into the hearts of His people will lead them to consecrate every day to His service; and thus invest it with honour. (See note on xiii. 9.) Dark indeed would be our world, if no arrangements of God secured to man stated seasons of rest from the toil and bustle of ordinary life, and called him to special and joyous communion with Himself.—The last clause of this verse affirms the principle, that no man can rightfully claim dominion over another man's conscience. Each of us is to inquire for himself, candidly and earnestly, what is true and right; each of us, praying for Divine help and guidance, is to seek to know the will of God, and to understand the path in which he should walk; and then, being “fully persuaded in his own mind,” he is to carry out his convictions, leaving to others the same liberty of action. For our *religious* principles and feelings, and the manifestation of them in outward forms, we are responsible to God,—and to God *alone*. But we must not abuse this principle, by including under the name of religious services practices which invade the rights of others. These, too, are sacred, and the law of Christ carefully guards and upholds them.

Verse 6. *He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the*

the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he ^ggiveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

7. For ^hnone of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

g 1 Cor. x. 31; 1 Tim. iv. 3.

h 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; Gal. ii. 20; 1 Thess. v. 10; 1 Peter iv. 2.

Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, &c. In these words the Apostle beautifully shows that the different usages of Christians—if only they are within the limits allowed by the law of Christ—may be *equally connected* with the great principle of *devotedness to Him*. Even in these usages, he contends, that principle may develop itself,—the mind looking beyond the immediate action to Him in whose service it is engaged, and whose abounding goodness it habitually recognises. It is the glory of a living Christianity, that it ennobles and sanctifies every engagement of human life. An habitual and dutiful regard to the Lord Jesus will communicate to our ordinary actions a measure of its own sanctity, and thus raise them above the sphere of mere worldly activity. Everything becomes hallowed, when done as a part of our service to Christ, and that under the influence of faith and love.

Verses 7, 8. *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; &c.* The principle of devotedness to Christ was one to which St. Paul ever assigned the highest importance, and on which he delighted to dwell. The course of his argument having suggested it, he now *lingers* on it as the grand characteristic of every Christian both in

8. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

life and in death. For it is of *true believers* that he here speaks. His first declaration, "None of us liveth to himself," has sometimes been cited as conveying the sentiment, that there is no human being whose spirit, and principles, and conduct affect himself only,—that every man, whether he designs it or not, is necessarily exerting an influence, for good or for evil, on others. But although this is a great and solemn truth, it is not *the* truth which St. Paul here affirms. In his language, "to live unto ourselves" is to make *some personal object*, as our own glory, or wealth, or pleasure, the *end* of life. Thus in 2 Cor. v. 15, he declares that Christ "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them, and rose again." In this passage, as in the one before us, he teaches us, that we are bound, by the first principles of our Christian profession, and by the great facts of the mediatorial scheme, to renounce "living to ourselves," and to regard ourselves as *dedicated to Christ*. Our *earthly life* is to be directed to His glory; and if it is, it will sustain a high and sacred character. *For we cannot live in vain, if we really live for Christ*. Our course, whether long or short, whether enlivened by success, or darkened by adversity, will accomplish a great purpose. Our *death*, too, is to be devoted to the Saviour's glory. We "die unto the Lord." It is an animating course of thought which the Apostle here suggests. The great purpose which we have kept in view since the grace of Christ led us to Himself,—the purpose which has given worth and dignity to our earthly career,—is not

9. For ⁱ to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be ^k Lord both of the dead and living.

ⁱ 2 Cor. v. 15.

^k Acts x. 36.

interrupted, but advanced, by our removal from earth. We die in Christ's own time; we show forth in death the efficacy of His atonement; and we pass onward to the realms of light, where the principle of devotedness to Him will develop itself in new services and amidst new relations. On earth and in heaven the Christian is distinguished by the same commanding feature of character. He is "*the Lord's*,"—thoughtfully and unreservedly given up to Him, to show forth His praise, and to do His will.

Verse 9. *For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.* The requirement of self-dedication to Christ is here placed in connection with the grand arrangements of the economy of redemption. The Lord Jesus, as the enthroned Mediator, rightfully claims universal homage and submission; and, in particular, He claims the entire devotion of those whom He has bought with His most precious blood. The death and resurrection of our Lord—the latter being regarded as the commencement of a life of unutterable glory—are here viewed in their relation to His mediatorial sovereignty. In submitting for us to the death of the cross, the Lord Jesus looked forward to "the joy that was set before Him,"—even His enthronement at the Father's right hand, and the gathering round Himself of a devoted people, on whom He should confer the loftiest blessings, and who should render to Him the warmth of their affections and all the energies of their being.—The authority with which the Mediator is invested extends both to "the dead and the living." They

10. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for 'we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

! Matt. xxv. 31, 32; Acts x. 42; xvii. 31; 2 Cor. v. 10; Jude 14, 15.

who have passed into the spiritual world, equally with those who still live upon this earth, are subjected to His control. And while many, alas! are here estranged from His government, and many who have gone into eternity have rejected Him, so that His government is to them one of judgment and terror, there are multitudes, both on earth and in the unseen world, who rejoice in His sway, and esteem His service the very blessedness of existence. It is now generally agreed, that the expression, "and rose," does not form part of the text. The more literal rendering is, "Christ both *died* and *lived*," the last term referring to His life *after* His submission to death,—His life of glory and universal dominion.

Verse 10. *But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand &c.* The Apostle now resumes his expostulation with those Christians who were in danger, respectively, of harshly censuring, or of treating with contempt, their brethren who differed from them. That expostulation he grounds on the fact to which the consideration of our Lord's mediatorial sovereignty had led him onward, that HE will at last appear as the Judge of men, and that by His sentence the eternal lot of every one of us must be decided. In the anticipation of that day when our common Lord will come to judgment, all mutual recriminations should be hushed. Instead of condemning or despising one another, we should realise our own position as hastening to the tribunal of the Lord Jesus, and should remember that a higher authority than

11. For it is written, * *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*

12. So then * every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

m Isa. xlv. 23 ; Phil. ii. 10.

n Matt. xii. 36 ; Gal. vi. 5 ; 1 Peter iv. 5.

ours will soon decide—and that for ever—the character of every human being.

Verse 11. *For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.* The great truth of a universal judgment, to be exercised by the Lord Jesus Christ, is here confirmed by a passage of the ancient Scriptures. The citation is from Isaiah xlv. 22—24, a passage remarkably rich in evangelical truth, while it is impressive and awful in its intimations of judgment on the rebellious. That part of it which the Apostle quotes, with only a slight deviation from the Hebrew, is introduced by the solemn oath of the Eternal One, so as to challenge our most reverent regard. It implies that not only will the devoted people of Christ dutifully acknowledge His sovereignty, but that even the knees which were never bent to Him on earth shall bow at last, and that even the tongues that blasphemed Him shall own, though reluctantly, His dominion. This grand consummation, the Apostle teaches us, will only be realised amidst the solemnities of the last great day.

Verse 12. *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* On this sentiment, which forms, indeed, the point of his appeal in the preceding verse, St. Paul lingers with solemn interest. He was anxious to leave the truth of our individual responsibility to God deeply impressed on

13. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that ° no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

o 1 Cor. viii. 9, 13; x. 32.

every mind. An habitual and profound conviction of this truth will repress all censorious feeling, and hush the murmurs of selfish irritation. The thoughtful and earnest spirit that looks forward to its own final account, to be rendered to Him from whose sentence there is no appeal, will be too jealous over itself, too solicitous to be right with Him, and to be approved by Him at last, to sit in judgment upon others; while it will shrink back with trembling from even seeming to invade His high prerogative.

Verse 13. *Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, &c.* Here the Apostle passes to another consideration, which should influence the conduct of believers towards each other, in respect of those things in which they might differ. He appeals to the principle of *brotherly love*; and he calls upon all Christians so far to regard the convictions, and even the prejudices, of their brethren, as not to place a stumblingblock in their path, or be the occasion of their falling into sin. This is the point which his language specially indicates. We should not, by our conduct, encourage a Christian brother to do that which, *in his case*,—with his imperfect views of the plans of Christ, and of the liberty which distinguishes the Christian economy,—would *involve sin*, and thus cause him to fall. There are other forms in which the disposition to meet the prejudices of our brethren may properly develop itself; but it is to *this case* that this injunction of the Apostle refers.

14. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, *p* that *there is* nothing * unclean of itself: but *q* to him that esteemeth any thing to be * unclean, to him *it is* unclean.

15. But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat,

p Acts x. 15; verses 2, 20; 1 Cor. x. 25; 1 Tim. iv. 4; Titus i. 15.

* Gr. common. *q* 1 Cor. viii. 7, 10. * Gr. common.

Verse 14. *I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him &c.* In these words St. Paul, first of all, authoritatively lays down a principle which distinguishes the Christian economy, and which was ultimately to mould the usages of all Christian societies. The distinctions of meats are now abolished. They belong to a preparatory dispensation: but under that more spiritual and comprehensive economy which the Lord Jesus has established, they are set aside, and the principle is laid down that "to the pure all things are pure." (Compare verse 20; 1 Tim. iv. 4; Titus i. 15.) This principle the Apostle asserts as matter of certain conviction to himself, and as that which he had received from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.—But he goes on to recognise as Christian brethren, and as deserving of kind consideration, those who did not, as yet, fully apprehend this truth, and in whose case, persuaded as they were that a particular kind of food was unclean and forbidden, it would have been wrong, and even sinful, to partake of it. For to do so, in such a state of mind, would have involved a disregard of duty, and a want of reverence for the Divine authority.

Verse 15. *But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.* It is worthy of our attention,

now walkest thou not * charitably. † Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

16. † Let not then your good be evil spoken of :

* Gr. *according to charity.* † 1 Cor. viii. 11.

‡ Rom. xii. 17.

that the Apostle, in urging this appeal on those who were strong in faith, and whose views of the Christian economy were correct and expanded, reminds them, again and again, that they whose scruples they were in danger of despising, and whom they might even lead into sin, were their *brethren*, their brethren *in Christ*. It is on the law of brotherly love, as laid down by our Lord Himself in His “new commandment,” that he founds this expostulation. The model of that love which we are to cherish towards each other, is the love of Christ Himself to us,—that love which led Him to lay down His life for our redemption. (John xiii. 34 ; xv. 12, 13.) And as that love, in its surpassing greatness, its inscrutable depth and tenderness, rises to his view, St. Paul says to the man who was disposed to follow his own inclinations, reckless whether he led his brother into sin or not, “Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.” He places the feeling which can trifle with the ruin of a brother for the sake of food, in contrast with the self-sacrificing benignity of our common Lord. Thus he reminds us that, if we have any degree of the mind that was in Christ, we shall shrink from frustrating His merciful design, by encouraging a weak brother to partake of that which he regards as *sinful*, though, indeed, it is in itself allowable, and would only be sinful to him because if, *with his views*, he partook of it, he would be violating the principle of entire submission to God.

Verse 16. *Let not then your good be evil spoken of.*

17. 'For the kingdom of God is not meat and

† 1 Cor. viii. 8.

There is considerable diversity of opinion as to the precise application of the general and indefinite phrase "your good." Several expositors, both ancient and modern, understand it of the Christian religion, which is exposed to slander and injury when its professors dispute about trifles. But the majority of commentators restrict it to the Christian liberty—the *freedom from ceremonial restraint*—to which the Apostle had referred in verse 14. This appears to be the preferable view; but to appreciate the full force of the phrase, we must combine this freedom itself with *the strength of faith*—the enlarged view of the Christian economy—which recognised it, and, on fitting occasions, was prepared to assert it. Both these things were *good*; but if they were maintained without a tender regard to the spiritual interests of others, they might give occasion of offence, and even lead to the most injurious results. Thus the very features of the Christian scheme which evinced its adaptation to be a universal religion might become the occasion of calling forth prejudice, and interfering with its wide diffusion.

Verse 17. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* This is one of those brief, but comprehensive and emphatic, sayings, which St. Paul so often introduces into his discussions. It is a characteristic feature of his writings, that he frequently pauses in a series of familiar remarks, and sometimes even turns aside from the course of an argument, to lay down, in a few impressive words, some great principle affecting the Christian economy, or the character and privileges of Christ's people. In the present

drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

instance, the thought of the *comparatively unimportant character* of the things about which the Roman believers differed, suggested the statement of what *is essential* to the subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom. The mention of the two in such a connection was likely to check the eagerness of party-discussion, and to fix the regard of all on the great things of the spiritual life.—There is some difficulty as to the precise meaning to be assigned to two of the terms which the Apostle here uses. The word "righteousness," for instance, has been understood by some, among whom may be mentioned Dr. John Brown, of that relative righteousness which God imputes to us upon our believing in the Lord Jesus; by others, as Tholuck and Dr. Hodge, of that inward and outward rectitude which belongs to Christ's true people; while others, again, as Dean Alford, consider that both these ideas are comprehended in it. In support of this last view it may be urged, that justification, though perfectly distinct from inward renewal, is yet intimately connected with it, "the renewing of the Holy Ghost" immediately following upon our being accounted righteous through Christ. But still it appears necessary to give to the term "righteousness" in this verse some *definite* import; and when we consider the prominence which St. Paul has given in this Epistle to the blessing of justification, and its connection with a state of "peace" and "joy," and when we reflect on the frequency with which he employs the word "righteousness" in reference to the righteousness which becomes ours through the work and sacrifice of Christ, appropriated by faith, we should almost seem to be doing violence to his established phraseology, if we passed

over this meaning for any other. If it be objected to this view that, according to it, no *explicit* mention is made of *evangelical holiness* as an essential characteristic of Christ's people, the answer is partly supplied by the consideration alluded to above,—that St. Paul ever regarded all who are justified through Christ as the subjects of a new inward life, which rescues them from the dominion of sin ; so that he sometimes, as in viii. 30, assumes this as implied when he does not expressly mention it. But a still more conclusive reply to the objection is, that in the following verse, according to the true reading, he recognises all believers as engaging, under the power of the Holy Ghost, in a course of active service to Christ. (See the note on that verse.)

The term "peace," also, has been differently understood by different expositors. Some have referred it to the inward peace which is immediately consequent on our justification ; while others have explained it of the pacific temper which distinguishes all true Christians. The former, however, seems to be its *natural* and *proper* import in this passage ; and it is borne out by the analogy between the two expressions, "peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Still this inward peace is always connected with a desire to maintain and diffuse peace around us. The sacred calm which pervades our souls, as we rely on Christ, and are accounted righteous in Him, gives a peculiar character to our whole spirit and deportment, and now, as the children of God, we strive to promote peace among all to whom our influence extends.

The third particular, "joy in the Holy Ghost," expresses not a state of rapturous excitement, but a deep inward happiness, the result of the indwelling of the Spirit, whose gracious influence forms the earnest of the pure and ever-flowing joy of the heavenly state.

18. For he that in these things serveth Christ "is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

u 2 Cor. viii. 21.

These, then, are the things to which the constitution of "the kingdom of God" assigns importance, leading, as they will do, according to the beautiful remark which follows, to a course of *practical service to Christ*. In comparison of these, meats and drinks sink into insignificance. The religion of Jesus Christ is eminently *a spiritual religion*,—each soul, for itself, being placed, through faith, beneath the Father's smile, and "filled with joy and peace in believing."

Verse 18. *For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.* It is now generally admitted, that the correct reading of this verse is not ἐν τοῖς, "in these things," but ἐν τούτῳ, "in this,"—a phrase which is susceptible of two meanings. It may signify "in," or "by Him," being referred to *the Holy Ghost*, whose indwelling is the source of the Christian's joy. Or it may be viewed, as by Dean Alford and others, as expressing "the aggregate of the three particulars" just referred to; in which case it would be equivalent to "in this state of experience." But, whichever of these interpretations is adopted, the general truth set forth is the same. The Apostle, carrying on his statement of what is essential to the subjects of "the kingdom of God," affirms that whosoever, *under the influence of that new life which the Spirit imparts*,—a life intimately connected with justification through Christ, and with sacred peace and joy,—pursues a course of service to Christ, "is acceptable to God," enjoys habitually the favour and complacency of the Eternal Father, and may justly claim the approval of his

19. ²Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith ³one may edify another.

20. ²For meat destroy not the work of God. ⁴All

² Ps. xxxiv. 14; Rom. xii. 18.

^y Rom. xv. 2; 1 Cor. xiv. 12; 1 Thess. v. 11. ^z Verse 15.

^a Matt. xv. 11; Acts x. 15; verse 14; Titus i. 15.

fellow-men. Thus the comprehensive declaration before us forms a striking recapitulation of the scheme of truth which St. Paul had unfolded in the earlier part of this Epistle.

Verse 19. *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and the things wherewith one may edify another.* This exhortation forms the natural inference from the principles just laid down, as to the distinguishing marks of the subjects of "the kingdom of God." If, under the Christian economy, meats and drinks are of little or no significance,—if, too, the people of Christ are united in the possession of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and under the gracious influence of the Spirit pursue a course of service to their common Lord and Master,—it is binding on them to avoid all needless and unprofitable disputes, to maintain harmony and union, and habitually to seek each other's establishment in the faith and in the graces which adorn the renewed character. Such a course is the only one which accords with their position and hopes, or which answers to the purposes of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 20. *For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil &c.* Here the Apostle again adverts to the considerations on which he had dwelt in verses 14, 15,—considerations which appealed to the

things indeed *are* pure ; 'but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence.

21. *It is* good neither to eat 'flesh, nor to drink

b 1 Cor. viii. 9, 10, 11, 12. c 1 Cor. viii. 13.

deepest and holiest feelings of the Christian heart. No man who himself enjoys the salvation of the Lord Jesus, and who is conscious of the great spiritual change which the Holy Ghost has wrought within him, can be indifferent to "the work of God" in others, or risk injuring and even destroying it by some personal indulgence which he might easily, and without detriment to his health, forego. The phrase here employed, "the work of God," is very suggestive. It recognises the operation of God in the whole process of individual salvation ; and it marks the Divine working as directed to a great result,—a glorious consummation. (Compare 2 Cor. v. 5, Ephes. ii. 10.) But "the work of God," the Apostle admonishes us, is necessarily impaired, and may be altogether undone, by trifling with duty, and venturing upon that which we believe to be sinful. Hence, although "all things," in themselves, "are pure," it is wrong for any one who believes a thing to be forbidden to partake of it while he retains that conviction ; and it is wrong for a professing Christian to do that which, he is well aware, is likely to lead his brother into *sin*. It is rather doubtful to which of these two cases the final clause of this verse refers. Probably the latter is that which the Apostle had specially in view.

Verse 21. *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby &c.* In these words St. Paul affirms the *moral loveliness* of a course of conduct which condescends to the weakness of our Christian brethren, and foregoes things in themselves right and proper, in order not

wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

22. Hast thou faith? have *it* to thyself before God. 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

d 1 John iii. 21.

to cast a stumblingblock in their path, or impair their Christian principles. He maintains, indeed, throughout this discussion, that "all things are pure," that the restrictions of former dispensations as to meats and drinks have been abolished; he speaks of those who failed to recognise this principle as "weak in the faith," whose scruples might ultimately give place to ampler and more correct views. But he was anxious that they who already held these more comprehensive views should treat their brethren with the kindest consideration, and draw back from everything which, by inducing them to act in opposition to the dictates of their conscience, would plunge them into guilt, and undo the gracious work of God.

Verses 22, 23. *Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth &c.* The "faith" here referred to is specially a firm confidence of the lawfulness of certain things according to the plan of Christ; but it supposes the general habit of reliance on the Lord Jesus, connected, as that will ever be, with a dutiful recognition of His authority. This faith might properly regulate the conduct of an individual as before God,—his conduct in all cases which would not involve injury to his brethren, or endanger their Christian principles. Acting upon his clear views of the comprehensive and spiritual character of the new economy, such a man was "happy," since he had a full

23. And he that ||doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

|| Or, *discerneth and putteth a difference between meats.* e Titus i. 15.

conviction that what he did was in accordance with the mind of Christ. But, on the other hand, the man who still had scruples as to the lawfulness of certain kinds of food, could not partake of such food without subjecting himself to condemnation. This is the import of the Apostle's statement, that "he that doubteth is damned if he eat,"—the word *damned*, when our translation was made, being simply equivalent to *condemned*. Nothing of which we even *fear* that it is wrong can be ventured upon without sin. This is the truth with which the Apostle closes this part of the discussion:—"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If a man doubts whether a thing is contrary to the law of Christ, and proceeds in that state of mind to do it, he violates the great principle of reverence for the Divine authority, which lies at the very foundation of a religious character.

CHAPTER XV.

1. WE ^athen that are strong ought to bear the

a Gal. vi. 1.

CHAPTER XV.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

HAVING dwelt on the particular questions which threatened to cause discord in the Roman Church, and affirmed the principles which should regulate the conduct of believers in relation to them, the Apostle now winds up this branch of his argument by urging the general duty of *kind consideration for others*. This duty he enforces by the example of the Lord Jesus; and having referred to a passage of the ancient Scriptures in support of his views, he takes occasion to speak of *the value of those Scriptures*, as conveying lessons which serve to sustain the patience, and promote the comfort, of believers under the gospel-dispensation. He then prays for the union of the Roman Christians in faith and mutual love, and charges them cordially to welcome each other, even as Christ had welcomed them. To promote this state of holy harmony, he again affirms the great truth which the whole argument of the Epistle had tended to establish, that under the Christian economy Jews and Gentiles are invested with equal religious privileges; and he implores for all the Christians at Rome the richest communications of peace, and joy, and hope.

St. Paul now proceeds to *the conclusion* of the Epistle. He speaks of his position and office as the Apostle of the Gentiles, as emboldening him to address the

^ainfirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

^b Rom. xiv. 1.

Roman Church, fully and authoritatively, on the great themes which he had discussed. He dwells on the character of the ministry to which he had been called by the Lord Jesus,—on the success with which his efforts had been crowned by his great Master,—and on the principle which had guided him in the selection of his spheres of labour. Then, by an easy transition, he passes to his plans for visiting Rome; and, adverting to his approaching mission to Judæa, with the contributions of the Churches of Macedonia and Achaia for the relief of the poor Christians there, he asks for the prayers of the Roman believers, that he might be preserved amidst the dangers to which he would be exposed, that his mission might conduce to the harmony and mutual love of Christ's people, and that he might be permitted to come to them with joy, to promote their establishment and comfort.

Verse 1. *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.* These words contain the *general conclusion* to which the preceding reasonings led. The Apostle identifies himself with those who were "*strong*,"—who had a firm conviction of the comprehensive character of the Christian economy, and who were not fettered by the scruples which still enfeebled some of the sincere followers of Christ, and impaired their comfort. And he calls upon those who had risen to the same enlarged views of the plans of Christ, to concur with him in adapting themselves, as far as possible, to the prejudices of their weaker brethren, and never to act *solely* with reference to their own pleasure or advantage. It is essential to the spirit of Christianity, that we should think

2. 'Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good ⁴to edification.

3. 'For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, ⁵The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.

c 1 Cor. ix. 19, 22; x. 24, 33; xiii. 5; Phil. ii. 4, 5. d Rom. xiv. 19.
e Matt. xxvi. 39; John v. 30; vi. 38. f Ps. lxix. 9.

of others as well as of ourselves; and it is a beautiful illustration of the power of Divine grace, when a man is ready to forego that which he is assured is in itself right, lest he should lead another to do violence to his conscience, and thus to fall into sin.

Verse 2. *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.* Here St. Paul enlarges on the general duty which he had just laid down. In opposition to the temper which would simply seek personal gratification, regardless of the spiritual interests of others, he calls upon all believers to aim at pleasing their Christian brethren, but only for their "good," and with a view to promote their "edification." That brotherly love which the law of Christ enjoins, while it involves a deep, spiritual sympathy, will produce an affectionate solicitude for the real welfare of our brethren in Christ, and will cause us to rejoice in contributing to build them up in faith and holiness.

Verse 3. *For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.* The temper of mind which St. Paul had just inculcated is now enforced by the example of Him to whom every Christian turns with mingled reverence, and trust, and love. A deep truth is suggested by the words, "Christ pleased not Himself." His life was one of *unreserved devotedness to the Father's will*, and one also of *self-sacrifice*

4. For *whatsoever* things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience

g Rom. iv. 23, 24 ; 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10 ; x. 11 ; 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

for man. And the Apostle illustrates this truth by a remarkable passage from one of the Messianic Psalms :—
 “For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up ; and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me.” (Ps. lxi. 9.) The first and most obvious thought suggested by these last words is, that the Redeemer stood, by His own choice, *the Object of the special hatred of the Father’s enemies.* Such was His devotion to the Father,—such the oneness between Him and the Father,—that He was necessarily the Object of intense dislike to those whose profession of piety was insincere, and whose hearts turned away from the purity of God and the spirituality of His worship. But there is a deeper truth, we conceive, involved in these words. That truth is, that, throughout our Lord’s earthly career, *man’s hostility to God, and dislike of His character and government, pressed, as a heavy burden, on His heart.* His spirit, pure and spotless in itself, was grieved, and distressed, and all but overwhelmed, as all the sins of men recoiled upon Him who had become the Representative and Substitute of all. Thus, in the highest sense, was the Saviour’s life one of *self-sacrifice* ; and that self-sacrifice was completed by the offering up of Himself upon the cross.

Verse 4. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, &c.* This beautiful declaration relative to the value of the ancient Scriptures, and the spiritual blessings to which the devout study of them is designed to conduce, follows most appropriately the quotation which the Apostle had just made. The

and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.

passage which he had cited was one of those which disclose their depth of meaning only to humble and earnest minds, and which can only be fully understood when viewed in the light of the great facts of the Christian economy. And the Apostle dwells on the thought, that the Inspired Writings of the former dispensation have a profound interest for *us*. Not only do they embrace facts of undying interest, and truths of universal application; but they present to us also the gradual unfolding of that scheme of grace which is now fully developed, and in the richest blessings of which we are invited to share.—The Divine authority of the Old Testament is here distinctly recognised. The Sacred Books of the Jewish Church are designated emphatically, and by way of distinction, “the Scriptures;” and the beautiful idea is suggested, that one presiding Mind guided and controlled the writers, so as to give unity to their productions, and so as to make them admonitory and comforting to the Church, as long as it shall continue in a state of conflict, and toil, and hope.—The state of experience to which the devout study of the Sacred Records is intended to contribute, is expressed in the words, “that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.” Our meditations on Divine truth are to conduce to our *perseverance* in a course of holy service to God, whatever difficulties may obstruct our path, and to our *unmurmuring submission* to Him, even when He may assign to us a lot of suffering and conflict. They are to conduce also to our *comfort*,—disclosing to us the gracious purposes of God towards His people, and the brighter scenes to which He is leading them through the afflictions and sorrows of earth. And thus will our *hope* of eternal

5. ^a Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another || according to Christ Jesus :

^a Rom. xii. 16 ; 1 Cor. i. 10 ; Phil. iii. 16. || Or, *after the example of.*

life be confirmed. Raised above the depression of earth, we shall often exult in the anticipation of that serener and purer region upon which our Forerunner has entered, and in which we shall share at last His rest and triumph.

Verse 5. *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, &c.* In this prayer St. Paul takes up again the two elements of *patience* and *comfort* to which he had just referred, connecting them with God as their Source, and intimating that He delights to impart them to His people. The appellation given to the Most High is full of instruction and encouragement. It reminds us, that the hidden strength which enables us to stand unmoved in the midst of adverse influences, and to bear up under the pressure of our deepest sorrows, and the hidden peace and joy which form the earnest of the rest of heaven, are God's gifts to His own ; and it shows us that God rejoices over His people thus to "establish them in Christ," and to impart to them a deep spiritual happiness. By these communications, too, God unites the hearts of His people in holy sympathy. He causes them "to be *like-minded*, one toward another, *according to Christ Jesus.*" Rising above the little things in reference to which they may yet differ, and discarding those selfish views and feelings which might estrange them from each other, they now welcome each other with unaffected love, developing the mind of their common Lord, and obeying with cheerfulness and delight His "new commandment."

6. That ye may 'with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7. Wherefore ^k receive ye one another, 'as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

i Acts iv. 24, 32.

k Rom. xiv. 1, 3.

l Rom. v. 2.

Verse 6. *That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* This is the natural result of that agreement in sentiment and feeling, with reference to the highest and holiest things, for which the Apostle had just prayed. When the hearts of believers are united in mutual love,—when the same profound convictions of essential truth, and the same deep spiritual joys, bind them to each other,—they will delight to engage in *common worship*, and to celebrate the glory of Him who has given His Son to raise them from their moral ruin, and to impart to them peace, consolation, and strength. Brought near to the Eternal Father, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus, they will acknowledge His perfections, and magnify the riches of His grace. For “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”—as the words of the Apostle should probably have been rendered—has now become their God and Father; and they look forward with cheerful hope to share the glory of Him through whom they have been raised to this high dignity. (See John xx. 17.)

Verse 7. *Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.* Here, again, St. Paul enforces the *practical conclusion* to be deduced from all his preceding reasonings. He falls back, in this his final exhortation on the subject of the differences which existed among the Roman Christians, on the important fact, that

8. Now I say that "Jesus Christ was a Minister of

m Matt. xv. 24; John i. 11; Acts iii. 25, 26; xiii. 46.

Christ had received them all. Their differences had not stood in the way of His owning them as His people; since they were not incompatible with the great principles of subjection to His authority and trust in His atonement. But if "Christ has received us," who may yet differ in some minor things, then ought we to "receive one another,"—cordially welcoming each other as brethren, and as sharers in the Saviour's love. To refuse to do so is to dishonour our common Lord, to set at nought His authority, and to affront His mercy. But, on the other hand, if we thus welcome each other, we shall show forth "the glory of God;" we shall evince, in our unaffected attachment and our deep spiritual sympathy, the powerful operation of His grace, and the accomplishment of one part of His design in leading us to Himself through Christ.

Verse 8. *Now I say that Jesus Christ was a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, &c.* As an inducement to that mutual acknowledgment and regard which he had so impressively urged, St. Paul again adverts to one of the great principles which he had maintained throughout the Epistle, and on which his mind evidently rested with holy satisfaction. That principle is, that *in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews and Gentiles are to be equally blessed*,—that while God's ancient people find in Him the fulfilment of those promises in which they and their fathers trusted, the Gentiles are to rejoice with them in a covenant-relation to God, and to celebrate with holy triumph the riches of His grace.—The terms in which the Apostle refers to our Lord's relation to the people of Israel are remarkably instructive and forcible. He was "a Minister of the cir-

the circumcision for the truth of God, * to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers :

* Rom. iii. 3 ; 2 Cor. i. 20.

cumcision." It was among the race of Israel that His *personal ministry* was exercised ; it was to them that He came with the offers of peace and blessing. It was no part of the Divine plan, that He should go from one nation to another, to announce salvation. He appeared in the midst of the ancient Church ; unfolded in its synagogues the deep, spiritual import of the Sacred Writings ; announced the near approach of " the kingdom of God ; " declared the inestimable blessings which He would impart to all who should come to Him ; and at length yielded up Himself to death, that He might open to mankind the way of life, and then rose from the dead, to establish His claims, to evince the completeness and sufficiency of His atonement, and to enter upon His mediatorial glory. It was reserved for His ambassadors, whom He solemnly commissioned, shortly before His ascension, to go forth in His name to all nations, and to proclaim to them salvation through His blood. Every devout mind will at once perceive an obvious fitness in this arrangement ; while it will recognise in it a fulfilment of the Divine engagements. " The truth of God " stood pledged to it. A succession of " promises made to the fathers " implied that the great Restorer should come as the Seed of Abraham, in the line of Isaac and Jacob ;—that He should be of the tribe of Judah ;—that He should come forth among His own people, a Prophet like unto Moses, though infinitely superior to him, clothed with loftier authority, and unfolding depths of the Divine counsel into which man could not pierce ;—and that He should spring from the royal house of David, when reduced to a state of

9. And ^o that the Gentiles might glorify God for *His* mercy ; as it is written, ^p For this cause I will confess to Thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy Name.

^o John x. 16 ; Rom. ix. 23. ^p Ps. xviii. 49.

depression and poverty. These promises were *fulfilled* in the appearance and work of the Lord Jesus among the race of Israel ; while the rich and inestimable blessings held forth to those who should trust in the Messiah are now emphatically *assured* to us. And all these promises of blessing, thus graciously “ confirmed,” are for the ancient people of God. The Christian economy frowns not upon them, nor treats them with cold neglect. To them the first offers of peace and blessing were made ; and still the Lord Jesus waits to welcome and embrace them.

Verse 9. *And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy ; as it is written, For this cause &c.* Here the Apostle affirms the other position, which he was anxious to maintain equally with the interest of Israel in the blessings conferred by the Messiah,—that the Gentiles are to rejoice, through the Lord Jesus, in the abounding “ mercy” of God, and that from them, gathered into His Church, and filled with sacred peace and joy, the song of thanksgiving is to ascend to Jehovah’s throne. This position he proceeds to illustrate and confirm by several passages of the Old Testament, each of which will amply repay careful inquiry. The first, which is comprised in the verse before us, is taken from Psalm xviii.,—a Psalm which contains David’s song of triumph, when he had been rescued by the signal interposition of God from all the dangers which threatened him, and had been placed on high as the king of Israel. In many portions of this Psalm, the spiritual mind of the Apostle, guided by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, perceived a deep signifi-

10. And again he saith, † Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people.

q Deut. xxxii. 43.

cance, which a superficial though arrogant criticism would pass over or deny. David's exaltation was *typical* of that of his greater Descendant, who, after His deep sufferings, should be enthroned at the Father's right hand, and control even His enemies by His resistless power. The praises which David offered to God for His own deliverance and elevation were designed by him to be known to the heathen around, that they might recognise the hand of Jehovah, and bow before HIM in lowly adoration. And much more are the Redeemer's declarations of holy triumph, after His deep humiliation, to be announced to mankind at large, that they may acknowledge His sovereignty, and seek from Him the blessings which they need. For as David gratefully affirmed that the hand of God had "lifted him up above those that rose up against him," and then added, "Therefore will I give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, before the heathen, and sing praises unto Thy Name;" so the Redeemer, when about to ascend to His heavenly throne, declared, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth," and then added, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Verse 10. *And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people.* This passage is cited from the song of Moses, uttered just before his removal to his heavenly rest. As the servant of God, who had so long stood at the head of the chosen people, he celebrated the praises of Jehovah,

11. And again, 'Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles ;
and laud Him, all ye people.

r Ps. cxvii. 1.

recorded some of His dealings with Israel, and, casting a prophetic glance into the future, adverted to the judgments that would come upon that people if they should prove unfaithful to Him, though even then His mercy would wait to welcome them again, if they penitently returned to Him. And as he winds up this song, he calls upon the Gentiles to unite with Israel in acknowledging God, and recognising both His righteousness and mercy : " Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people : for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries, and will be merciful unto His land and to His people." (Deut. xxxii. 43.) Thus did he in effect declare, that the selection of Israel to be the people of God did not involve the exclusion of the Gentiles ; but that the full development of the Divine plan would bring about their union with the chosen race, in the common acknowledgment of the Divine glory, and of the working of the Divine hand.

Verse 11. *And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles ; and laud Him, all ye people.* St. Paul once more turns to the Book of Psalms, and quotes the commencement of the one hundred and seventeenth,—the shortest in the whole collection :—" O praise the Lord, all ye nations ; praise Him, all ye people. For His merciful kindness is great toward us ; and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise ye the Lord." The most striking feature of this Psalm—but one common to it with several others—is, that it calls upon all the Gentiles, as well as upon the people of Israel, to celebrate the praises of Jehovah on account of His great and abounding mercy. Thus did it rebuke, in the strongest manner, the haughty and exclusive spirit

12. And again, Esaias saith, 'There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles: in Him shall the Gentiles trust.

s Isa. xi. 1, 10; Rev. v. 5; xxii. 16.

which led many of the Jews of our Lord's day to turn away contemptuously from the Gentiles, while it foreshadowed the comprehensive arrangements of the gospel-dispensation.

Verse 12. *And, again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise &c.* The passage of Isaiah here referred to, xi. 10, belongs to a section which clearly relates to the Messiah. In our Version of the Old Testament, which follows almost literally the Hebrew text, the passage is as follows:—"And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and His rest shall be glorious." The Apostle, in citing it, follows the Septuagint Version, which, as Dr. Patrick Fairbairn has well observed, is a free translation, giving the sense of the Hebrew, but in a simpler form. "To be a banner to the Gentiles is, in plain language, to take the leadership or government of them; and to seek to Him in such a connection, must be all one with repairing to Him in confidence and hope." (*Hermeneutical Manual*, p. 396.) Here then was a passage of the evangelical prophet, in which, as indeed in so many others, he explicitly affirmed, that the glorious reign of the Messiah, who should come forth as "a Shoot" from the stem of Jesse, when that family was low and depressed, should embrace the Gentiles, and that to HIM they should come in humble confidence, committing their souls into His hands, and then rejoicing in the conscious experience of His salvation.

13. Now the God of hope fill you with all 'joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

† Rom. xii. 12 ; xiv. 17. .

Verse 13. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.* Having thus re-affirmed and illustrated the great principle of the union of Jews and Gentiles, under the gospel, in equal religious privileges, St. Paul now prays for the Church at Rome, that God would vouchsafe to them the richest spiritual consolations. In these *prayers* of his for the Churches, we have some of his most impressive descriptions of *Christian experience*. They especially show, how foreign from his sentiments were those views of the Christian life which would exclude from it all deep and hallowed joys, and would resolve personal religion into a simple belief of the truth combined with active efforts to do the Divine will—The appellation which he here gives to the Most High may be collated with that in verse 5. There he speaks of God as “the God of *patience and consolation* ;” here as “the God of *hope*.” Thus he reminds us, that religious hope is the *gift* of God to man. It is a hope breathed into the soul by the Holy Ghost, and sustained by His continual indwelling. He reminds us, further, that God *delights* to fill the hearts of His people with heavenly hope ; for thus are they attracted to Himself, and thus, too, are they assisted to serve Him, and to accomplish the great end of life. Contemplating God under this inviting character, the Apostle prays that the Roman Christians might be “filled” by Him “with all joy and peace in believing,”—with the deep and holy *joy* consequent upon the reception of Christ by faith, as the Spirit

14. And *I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, *filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

u 2 Peter i. 12 ; 1 John ii. 21. w 1 Cor. viii. 1, 7, 10.

banishes the sense of condemnation, and prompts the cry, "Abba, Father,"—and with the *peace* "which passeth all understanding," the very peace of Christ Himself, which can be maintained amidst the trials and sorrows of earth, and which forms the foretaste of the unfailing happiness of heaven. Throughout the Christian life, this joy and peace are connected with *faith in Jesus*; and as our views of the economy of grace expand, and our faith itself is established, our spiritual consolations may abound yet more and more. For now we feel increasingly, how firm is the foundation on which we rest; how rich the provision which has been made for all our wants; and how ample and exhaustless the treasures which there are in Christ for all who abide in Him. The result of this holy joy and peace, inspired by the Holy Ghost, as we rest on Christ, will be that we shall "*abound in hope*." The scenes of the heavenly world will appear to us ineffably attractive; while "the power of the Holy Ghost," sanctifying our affections, and forming "the earnest" of the promised "inheritance," will enable us to rejoice in the prospect of seeing Christ as He is, and still more in the prospect of a *perfect* conformity to Him in His state of glory.

Verse 14. *And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, &c.* At this point the CONCLUSION of the Epistle begins. St. Paul had completed his statements on the nature and mode of the Christian salvation, and on the relative position of the Jews

15. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, *because of the grace that is given to me of God,

* Rom. i. 5; xii. 3; Gal. i. 15; Ephes. iii. 7, 8.

and the Gentiles under the new economy; and he had enforced the duties of the Christian life, and pointed out the principles which should influence believers in relation to those things in which they might innocently differ. And now he winds up his Epistle with various *personal references*. Looking back upon some of the topics which he had treated, and some of the expostulations which he had urged, he guards the Roman believers against the supposition, that these implied, on his part, a low estimate of their Christian attainments. On the contrary, he gracefully avows his persuasion, that the members of that Church were, generally speaking, devout, intelligent, and even established Christians; that they were "full of goodness," and "filled with all knowledge," instructed at large in the doctrine of Christ, and thus also "able to admonish one another." There were, doubtless, some exceptions to this statement; but they were comparatively few; and the Church at Rome was, at this time, eminently distinguished by a lively faith, and by the freshness of the other graces of the Christian character. (Compare i. 8, 11, 12.)

Verse 15. *Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, &c.* Here the Apostle delicately refers to the *authoritative character* of his Epistle, and the *claims* of his teaching on the deference and obedience of the Roman Christians, whatever might be their attainments in piety and knowledge. The phrase, "in some sort," or "in part," (*ἀπὸ μέρους*;) is designed to qualify the

16. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that

y Rom. xi. 13; Gal. ii. 7, 8, 9; 1 Tim. ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 11.

word rendered "more boldly," and to restrict it to *some parts* of the Epistle, in which he had dwelt on topics which might shock the prejudices of some members of the Church. As to many things, indeed, he intimates that he was only "putting them in mind," recalling to them truths with which they were already acquainted, though placing them, it may be, in new combinations, and enforcing them with the power which the special inspiration of the Spirit conferred. But he affirms that it properly belonged to him to instruct and admonish them, in virtue of the *office* with which he had been invested by God, and the *grace* which had been vouchsafed to him to qualify him for its duties. He was an *Apostle* of Jesus Christ; and his mission was specially to the *Gentiles*. In all the questions, therefore, which affected the position of the Gentiles in the Church of God he had the deepest interest; while the authority given to him by Christ empowered him to decide them.

Verse 16. *That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, &c.* The views which St. Paul gives us in this verse of the *nature* and *design* of the *ministry* with which he was invested by the Lord Jesus are remarkably copious and instructive. That ministry was, generally, a service to Jesus Christ, and it was to be specially exercised among the Gentiles, to whom he was commissioned to unfold the scheme of God for their recovery and salvation. The word which we translate "minister" in the first clause, *leitourγός*, is singularly expressive. Its primary import is that of a *public officer* rendering important service to a community; and in

the ||^{*}offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

|| Or, *sacrificing*. z Isa. lxvi. 20; Phil. ii. 17.

affirming that he was "a minister of Jesus Christ," St. Paul in effect declares that he stood forth as *one of Christ's official servants, holding an important charge in His Church and Kingdom, and that for the benefit of His people*. The word which he uses in the next clause, "*ministering* the gospel of God," *ἱερουργούντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Θεοῦ*, is a very different term, and one which conveys a reference to *the work of a priest*. But the words which follow clearly show that the Apostle does not speak of himself as a priest in the sense of one who offers a propitiatory sacrifice for his people; and this passage, certainly, cannot be justly alleged in support of the position, that the Christian ministry is strictly and properly a priesthood. No allusion is here made to what is now contended for as "the eucharistic sacrifice;" but the Apostle tells us that the offering which, in this ministration to Christ, he presented, was that of the converted Gentiles, sanctified by the Holy Ghost. His words convey, we conceive, this meaning,—that his work, as a public officer of the Lord Jesus, resembled that of a priest, inasmuch as he was *separated to SACRED SERVICE*; but, instead of offering up sacrifice, in the ordinary sense of the word, he had to use, in his *priestly action*, "the Gospel of God," and by the faithful announcement of this, with the accompanying power of the Spirit, to lead the Gentiles to the attainment of peace and holiness in Christ, that he might present *them* as an "*acceptable offering*" to God. Dean Alford properly remarks, "The language is evidently figurative, and can by no possibility be taken as a sanction for any view of the Christian minister as a sacrificing priest,

17. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ, "in those things which pertain to God.

18. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things ^bwhich Christ hath not wrought by me, ^cto make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

Heb. v. 1.

^b Acts xxi. 19; Gal. ii. 8. ^c Rom. i. 5; xvi. 26.

otherwise than *according to that figure*,—viz., that he offers to God *the acceptable sacrifice of those who by his means believe on Christ.*" It is well for us to linger on the thought which the Apostle's last words suggest, that the Christian ministry fails to accomplish its intended purpose, unless men are so brought to Christ as to enjoy the consecration of the Holy Ghost, and thus become a living sacrifice to God.

Verse 17. *I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ, in those things which pertain to God.* This declaration is not intended to convey the idea, that the Apostle felt that he might justly dwell on *his own position and office* with a feeling of *glorying*: it points, rather, to the *success* with which the Lord Jesus had crowned his labours, and he intimates that his glorying was *in Christ*, to whose work and sacrifice he devoutly referred all spiritual good, while he reverently acknowledged the agency of the Holy Spirit in every case of genuine conversion. The literal rendering of the verse is, "I have, therefore, glorying in Christ Jesus, as to the things that pertain to God." The sentiment thus briefly indicated is brought out and illustrated in the following verses.

Verse 18. *For I will not dare to speak of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, &c.* Here, in the most distinct manner, St. Paul recognises *the agency of Christ* in

19. "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ.

d Acts xix. 11; 2 Cor. xii. 12.

bringing so many of the Gentiles to a believing submission to the gospel; and he represents himself as only an *instrument* of his glorified Lord. With devout gratitude he looked back upon his career as an Apostle of Jesus Christ; and he felt that it was amply sufficient to recall the success which had been *actually* vouchsafed to his labours, and that there was no temptation to exaggerate, or to speak of "things which Christ had not wrought" by *him*. Indeed, from everything of this kind his strict regard to truth would have caused him instantly to recoil.—The last clause, "by," or "*in* word and deed," should probably be connected with the term "obedient," so as to convey the idea, that the submission of the Gentiles to the gospel of Christ was both *openly avowed* and *practically exemplified*.

Verse 19. *Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, &c.* It is very instructive to mark the combination of thought in the first part of this verse. St. Paul states the *means* by which the submission of the Gentiles had been brought about, and shows *how* the power of Christ wrought by him to subdue them to Himself. He refers, first, to "the power of the signs and wonders" which attended his ministry, ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων; and then he refers to "the power of the Spirit of God," ἐν δυνάμει Πνεύματος Ἁγίου,—the direct agency of the Holy Ghost put forth on the hearts of men. In contemplating the success of the apostolic ministry both these things must be kept in

20. Yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, 'lest I should build upon another man's foundation :

21. But as it is written, 'To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand.

e 2 Cor. x. 13, 15, 16. . f Isa. lii. 15.

view. The Christian message was *accredited and attested* by the *miracles* which the Apostles were enabled to perform. These not only arrested attention, but they showed also that a power greater than that of man accompanied the announcement of the death and resurrection of Jesus. But had there been only "the power of signs and wonders," no *saving* results would have followed. The great excellence of the apostolic ministry was, that "*the power of the Spirit of God*" attended it, applying the truth of Christ to the conscience of men, and thus leading them to Him for salvation. In the assurance that such a power had accompanied his own labours, St. Paul could gratefully survey the vast field over which those labours had extended, and could rejoice in the thought, that he had "fulfilled" his office as an evangelist, unfolding in every place "the gospel of Christ," so as to gather men to Him, and prepare them for His eternal glory.

Verses 20, 21. *Yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, &c.* In these verses St. Paul states the principle which had guided him in the choice of his spheres of labour. His apostolic zeal impelled him to go to those who had never heard of Christ, and the gloom of whose spiritual wretchedness had never been relieved by the offers of mercy in Him. This was, emphatically, his mission. He was reluctant to "build upon

22. For which cause also ^gI have been ||much hindered from coming to you.

23. But now having no more place in these parts, and ^hhaving a great desire these many years to come unto you;

g Rom. i. 13; 1 Thess. ii. 17, 18. || Or, *many ways*; or, *oftentimes*.
h Acts xix. 21; verse 32; Rom. i. 11.

another man's foundation," so as merely to establish in the faith those who had been won to it by some other ambassador of the Lord Jesus. And he felt that, in thus seeking to evangelise nations that had never heard the message of grace, he was carrying out the predictions of the ancient Scriptures, as to the blessings that should follow the deep humiliation of the Messiah. The passage which he brings forward, Isai. lii. 15, is quoted according to the Septuagint Version; but that version faithfully conveys the import of the Hebrew, though there is a slight variation in some of the terms.

Verses 22, 23, 24. *For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, &c.* In the opening of this Epistle, St. Paul had adverted to his earnest and long-cherished desire to visit the Church at Rome, that he might contribute to the establishment of its members in faith and holiness. To that desire he here again alludes; and, with evident satisfaction, unfolds the plan which he had formed for realising it. Hitherto, acting on his great principle, to proclaim Christ where He had not before been named, he had felt it to be his duty to defer his visit to Rome, and to go rather to other great cities which had not, as yet, been visited by the heralds of the Cross. But now the providence of God seemed to point his way to Rome. He had already

24. Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you : for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled * with your *company*.

i Acts xiii. 3.

* Gr. *with you*, verse 32.

preached the gospel in various parts of the East, and in several of the leading cities of Macedonia and Greece ; and his heart, still true to his high vocation, and still strong in the work of Christ, longed to go even to Spain, to plant Christianity in that extensive and important country. But Rome lay in his way to Spain ; and he anticipated, with sacred pleasure, the refreshment of spirit which he should have in his intercourse with the believers there, and the sympathy and active support which they might afford him in his contemplated missionary journey. Whether this visit to Spain was ultimately accomplished by the Apostle is matter of uncertainty. The circumstances under which he actually came to Rome were very different from those which he had sketched in his own mind. The misgivings which he seems to have felt, at times, in reference to the mission to Jerusalem on which he was now about to enter, were more than realised ; his plans of apostolic labour were, for awhile, rudely interrupted ; and when he did visit Rome, he came to it as a prisoner, to await the sentence of the imperial tribunal on his case. For two years the judicial investigation of that case was deferred ; and when, at length, St. Paul was set free, it may be that he thought it better again to visit some of the Churches which he had planted. But from the point where the Acts of the Apostles closes, there is considerable obscurity resting on his history, until we find him again

25. But now ²I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

26. For ^lit hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

27. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For ^mif the Gentiles have been made par-

k Acts xix. 21; xx. 22; xxiv. 17. *l* 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2;
2 Cor. viii. 1; ix. 2, 12. *m* Rom. xi. 17.

in Rome, awaiting the termination of his labours and his life.

Verses 25, 26. *But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia, &c.* Here St. Paul explains the reason why he could not immediately visit Rome; and this passage enables us to fix with certainty the period in his history in which this Epistle was written. He was now at Corinth, preparing to go to Jerusalem with certain brethren who had been chosen by the Churches of Macedonia and Achaia to accompany him, to convey to the poor Christians there a large contribution for their relief. It was the earnest wish of these Churches, that St. Paul should himself go with their messengers; (1 Cor. xvi. 3, 4; 2 Cor. viii. 1—6, 17—24;) and his own affectionate heart prompted him to undertake this errand of mercy, and to convey to the Hebrew Christians a practical expression of the love of their Gentile brethren. The time, then, which is indicated, is that noted by St. Luke in Acts xx. 3—5.

Verse 27. *It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers &c.* In his usual manner, St. Paul turns aside, for a moment, from the fact which he had just mentioned, in describing his own

takers of their spiritual things, * their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them * this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

* 1 Cor. ix. 11; Gal. vi. 6. o Phil. iv. 17.

plans, to affirm a *principle* suggested by it. The Christians to be relieved were of the race of Israel, and, as such, belonged to the visible Church of God under the ancient economy; and the Apostle recognised a beautiful fitness in the arrangement, that they who were formerly afar off from religious privileges, but who had been brought near in Christ, and combined with the believing Israelites in the possession of the loftiest spiritual blessings, should voluntarily contribute of their substance to their elder brethren. All Christians, indeed, who are in distress have claims, according to the law of Christ, on the sympathy and aid of their brethren who are more favoured; and those claims the Apostle was never slow to enforce. But here was a *special* case; and this conduct of the Gentile Churches awakened a lively satisfaction in the breast of St. Paul, since he dwelt upon it as a just and fitting acknowledgment of the benefits which they had themselves received. Men of the race of Israel had gone forth to tell them of the Messiah, and had led them to the enjoyment of the richest blessings; and it was becoming, therefore, that they, though not able to add to the religious light which the Jewish believers possessed, should give to them of what they had, and should, from their abundance, relieve their necessities, and soothe their woes.

Verse 28. *When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, &c.* Here the Apostle

29. * And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.

p Rom. i. 11.

resumes the statement of his plans for visiting Rome. Nothing was to intervene but the accomplishment of this mission to Jerusalem. As soon as he should have *safely delivered up*—as the term “sealed” here implies—the contribution which formed “the *fruit*” of the faith and love of the Gentile Christians, evincing, as it did, their possession of the mind of Christ, and their obedience to His law, he would turn his face to Rome; that, after a season of refreshing intercourse with the Church there, he might be helped forward by them on his evangelistic mission to Spain.

Verse 29. *And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ.* It is instructive to observe the *confidence* of the Apostle, that, when he did visit the Church at Rome, his intercourse with them would be *fraught with spiritual blessing*. There were some circumstances connected with the journey before him, and with that which he anticipated from Judæa to Rome, which awakened his fears and doubts. But on *this* point he had no misgivings. “*And I am sure that when I come unto you, &c.*” This was the language, not of pride, nor of self-reliance, but of unwavering faith in the promise of the Lord Jesus, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” The “blessing” which St. Paul was assured that he should be the instrument of communicating to the Church at Rome, was one of which *Christ Himself* was the *Author and Bestower*. All the best and most ancient MSS. have the reading, “the fulness of

30. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and ^rfor the love of the Spirit, ^rthat ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me ;

q Phil. ii. 1. r 2 Cor. i. 11 ; Col. iv. 12.

the blessing of Christ ;" and this reading is now generally adopted. Nor should we overlook the force of the expression, "the *fulness* of the blessing of Christ." It marks that blessing as *rich* and *ample*. The grace of the Saviour meets *all* the wants of man. It gives peace to the troubled conscience ; it imparts purity to the heart that had wept over its pollutions ; it strengthens the mind, conscious of its utter feebleness, for the discharge of every duty ; it consoles it under the inevitable trials of life ; and it cheers it with the hope of a blissful immortality.

Verse 30. *Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, &c.* In the anticipation of the varied dangers which threatened him, St. Paul now earnestly requests the prayers of the Roman Christians on his behalf. In doing this, he adverts to the *tender* and *sacred ties* by which Christians are bound to each other, and which clearly involve an obligation to pray for each other, more particularly when such prayers are expressly asked. He refers, first, to *their common relation to the Lord Jesus Christ*,—a relation which constitutes them truly one ; and then he refers to that deep *mutual love* which the *Holy Ghost* breathes into the hearts of all true believers,—a love which causes them to feel the sorrows and trials of their brethren as if they were their own. This appears to be the import of the phrase, "the love of the Spirit ;" though it may be understood of the love of the Holy Ghost to us, in whom He condescends to dwell as the

31. * That I may be delivered from them that || do not believe in Judæa; and that my 'service which *I have* for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;

* 2 Thess. iii. 2. || Or, *are disobedient.* † 2 Cor. viii. 4.

Comforter and the Sanctifier; so that *for His sake also* we should be anxious to succour our brethren, and be ever ready to remember them in prayer.—This passage may be properly appealed to as illustrating, like many others, the value which St. Paul placed on *intercessory prayer*, and as showing the special claims which Ministers, and all who are called to arduous service in Christ's cause, have on the prayers of His people. It illustrates, also, the *earnestness* which should characterise our prayers: for the Apostle calls upon the Roman Christians to "*strive together with him in prayer,*" putting forth all the powers of their souls, and grasping with holy firmness all the promises of God.

Verse 31. *That I may be delivered from them which do not believe in Judæa, and that my service &c.* In this and the following verse St. Paul states the *particular requests* which he was anxious that the Roman Christians should present to God on his behalf. He had reason to fear, that the mission upon which he was now entering would be fraught with danger to himself. It had been his original intention, as we learn from Acts xx. 3, to sail from Corinth to Syria; but, finding that some of the unbelieving Jews had formed a scheme to kill him, he altered his plan, and determined to return to Macedonia, and thence to pass over into Asia. He well knew, however, that the spirit of direct personal hostility to himself, which actuated so many of the race of Israel who stood aloof from the Lord Jesus, would manifest itself in other forms, and would seek to

32. "That I may come unto you with joy * by the will of God, and may with you be † refreshed.

* Rom. i. 10. † Acts xviii. 21; 1 Cor. iv. 19; James iv. 15.

† 1 Cor. xvi. 18; 2 Cor. vii. 13; 2 Tim. i. 16; Philem. 7, 20.

compass his ruin. His hope, in these circumstances, was in the special Providence of God; and for the interposition of that Providence he asked the Roman Christians earnestly to pray. Nor for this alone. He was anxious that his mission to Jerusalem should promote harmony and love among the Churches of Christ; and he asked for the prayers of the Roman believers, that God would so dispose the hearts of the Hebrew Christians, that the contribution which he was about to bear to them might be accepted with all the warmth of fraternal love.

Verse 32. *That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.* This was the third thing for which the Apostle requested the prayers of the Church at Rome, and it was partly in relation to this that he wished them to pray for the other things which he had mentioned. A pleasing hope rose in his mind, that his visit to Jerusalem would not only be without injury to himself, but would contribute to unite the Jewish and Gentile Christians in mutual affection. If this should be so, then he would be able to set out for Rome with holy satisfaction and joy; and coming to the Church there "in the fulness of the blessing of Christ," his own spirit would be abundantly "refreshed," while he would be enabled to promote their edification and comfort. But he knew that such a result could only be brought about by the special interposition of Divine Providence; and he referred it to "the will of God," while he asked the Roman believers

33. Now * the God of peace *be* with you all. Amen.

* Rom. xvi. 20; 1 Cor. xiv. 33; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Phil. iv. 9;
1 Thess. v. 23; 2 Thess. iii. 16; Heb. xiii. 20.

earnestly to solicit it in prayer. The arrangements of that "will" differed, in many things, from the hopes of the Apostle. God permitted him so far to fall into the hands of "them that did not believe in Judæa," that his plans were broken in upon, and his apostolical labours restricted; but, on the other hand, he was sheltered in the hour of danger, and his valuable life was preserved. To some extent, then, his own prayers, and those of the Roman Christians on his behalf, were answered; though *all* that they asked for was not granted. He came to Rome; but he came as a prisoner; and yet, even in his bonds, he was enabled to establish the faith of those who had embraced the Saviour, and to enlarge their views of the privileges and blessings of the Christian economy.

Verse 33. *Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.* Such is the benediction with which St. Paul winds up this section of his concluding remarks. The appellation here given to the Most High beautifully accords with the hope he had just expressed, that his mission to Jerusalem might contribute to the harmony and love of the Churches of Christ. It is an appellation, too, remarkably rich in spiritual truth. It reminds us that *peace is God's gift to man in Christ Jesus*. He restores us to peace with Himself, and thus gives us peace and tranquillity of conscience; and He delights over us as we maintain peace with each other. Thus, just in proportion as the Divine overtures of mercy are embraced, and the hearts of men are surrendered to the sway of God, peace is diffused around, and the strife

and discord which sin has introduced into this world are banished. And the Apostle, with His own soul full of this holy peace, implores for the Roman believers the abiding presence of HIM whose gift it is.

CHAPTER XVI.

1. I COMMEND unto you Phœbe our sister, which is

CHAPTER XVI.—GENERAL OUTLINE.

ST. PAUL, being about to close his Epistle, commends to the Church at Rome Phœbe, the bearer of it; and then sends his *affectionate greetings* to some Christians, at that time residing there, whom he knew and loved. He next addresses an emphatic *charge* to the Church, to shun those who sought to cause divisions; and depicts, in vivid language, the baseness of such conduct. He expresses his confidence in the Roman Christians; declares his firm persuasion, that God would enable them to triumph over all the arts of Satan; and implores for them the abounding grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Resuming his messages of love, St. Paul now sends to the Church at Rome the *salutations* of some who were with him at Corinth; and, after repeating his benediction, he winds up the Epistle with a sublime *doxology*, in which he recalls many of the great truths on which he had dwelt, and ascribes to God, the Fountain of wisdom, a glory that shall endure for ever, and form the theme of ceaseless praise and adoration.

Verse 1. *I commend unto you Phœbe, our sister, which is a servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea.* There is every reason to believe, that the excellent woman whom St. Paul here commends to the Roman Church was the bearer of this Epistle, as stated in the subscription,—although that

a servant of the Church which is at "Cenchrea.

2. 'That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you : for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

a Acts xviii. 18.

b Phil. ii. 29 ; 3 John 5, 6.

subscription was not written by the Apostle, but added by a later hand. She was a *deaconess* of the Church at Cenchrea, which formed the *eastern* port of Corinth, on the Saronic gulf. The deaconesses had chiefly to minister to women in the early Churches, in most of the ways in which the deacons ministered to men, visiting the sick and the poor, and instructing catechumens. The office was, for some ages, continued in the Church ; but gradually fell into disuse.

Verse 2. *That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business &c.* This verse pleasingly indicates the *claims* which Christian brotherhood gives us on the *kind regard*, and, in certain circumstances, on the *aid*, of our fellow-Christians ; and it suggests the readiness with which we should render any service in our power to those who have been forward to succour others. The terms which the Apostle uses in the first clause are very instructive and forcible :—"that ye receive her *in the Lord, as becometh saints.*" The welcome to be given to Phœbe was to be emphatically a *Christian* welcome. She was to be received and honoured as a partaker of the grace of the Lord Jesus, and as one united to Him ;—to be received in a manner suited to the purity and love which should distinguish believers, a manner worthy of those who were consecrated to God by the power of the

3. Greet *c*Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus :

4. Who have for my life laid down their own necks : unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the Churches of the Gentiles.

5. Likewise *greet* *d*the Church that is in their

c Acts xviii. 2, 18, 26 ; 2 Tim. iv. 19.

d 1 Cor. xvi. 19 ; Col. iv. 15 ; Philem. 2.

Spirit of Christ. Nor was this all. The Church at Rome was requested by St. Paul to afford her assistance in the particular business which led her to visit that metropolis ; for *Christianity knows nothing of a barren and powerless love*. Phœbe, too, had special claims on the regard of the Churches of Christ. She had been herself a succourer of many, and had even ministered to the wants of the Apostle, and, it may be, had waited on him in some period of sickness.

Verses 3, 4. *Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus : who have for my life &c.* These devote Christians are known to us from the statements contained in Acts xviii. 1—3, 18—21, 24—26. St. Paul was greatly attached to them ; and they not only rendered him help in his great work, but exposed their own lives to danger to rescue his. Dean Alford, following Neander and others, suggests that this might have been at Corinth, (Acts xviii. 6,) or at Ephesus. (Acts xix.) The generous and grateful heart of the Apostle never lost sight of this proof of love to himself and devotion to the Saviour's cause, and he beautifully refers to the esteem and honour in which, on account of it, Priscilla and Aquila were held by the Gentile Churches generally.

Verses 5. *Likewise greet the Church that is in their house.*

house. Salute my well-beloved Epænetus, who is 'the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

6. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.

7. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the Apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

e 1 Cor. xvi. 15. *f* Gal i. 22.

Some expositors understand this of *the family* of Aquila and Priscilla; but the more general view, and that which appears decidedly preferable, is, that it refers to the Christians who were accustomed to assemble for worship and religious fellowship in the house of these devoted persons. This passage, when collated with 1 Cor. xvi. 19, suggests the conclusion, that *wherever* Aquila and Priscilla resided, they threw open their premises for Christian assemblies.

Salute my well-beloved Epænetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. It is now generally admitted that the term "Asia," not "Achaia," is the correct reading in the last clause. The reference is to the proconsular Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital. This passage is thus in perfect harmony with 1 Cor. xvi. 15, in which "the house of Stephanas" is spoken of as "the firstfruits of Achaia."

Verse 6. *Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.* On this salutation we may linger for a moment, as one illustration, among many afforded by this chapter, of the *gratitude* which filled the heart of the Apostle for any services rendered to him. He did not accept acts of kindness as matters of course, and then dismiss them from his memory. He loved to recall them, and, when occasion served, to make honourable mention of them.

Verse 7. *Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, &c.* It has been matter of dispute,

8. Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

9. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

10. Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' || *household*.

11. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them

|| Or, *friends*.

whether Andronicus and Junias—for the latter term is probably the name of a *man*—are here spoken of as *Apostles*, in the *secondary* and *wider* sense in which that designation is applied to some of Paul's companions, when regarded conjointly with himself, (Acts xiv. 4, 14; 1 Thess. ii. 6,) or whether the import of the clause is, that these persons were well known and highly esteemed by the Apostles properly so called. The latter view appears to be the correct one. On some occasion, which cannot now be ascertained, they had shared imprisonment with St. Paul; and he evidently regarded them with great respect and love. His reference to their lengthened career as believers in the Lord Jesus—"who also were in Christ *before me*"—is instructive and affecting. As he named them, the thought rose to his mind, that even when *he* was a blasphemer and persecutor, *they* knew the blessedness of fellowship with Christ; and he loved and honoured them as *established Christians*.

Verse 9. *Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.* The more correct translation of the first of these names is *Urbanus*, the Greek word being *Ὀυρβανόν*. It is a *man* who is referred to.

Verses 10, 11. *Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. Salute Herodion &c.* The word used in the first of these saluta-

that be of the || *household* of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

12. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.

13. Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his

|| Or, *friends.* g 2 John 1.

tions, "*approved* in Christ," conveys the idea that the piety of Apelles had been subjected to severe *tests*, and that in all these he had been found faithful. The expression employed in reference to the family, or friends, both of Aristobulus and of Narcissus, is very general, and may be interpreted with great latitude. It is not implied, *necessarily*, that either Aristobulus or Narcissus was himself a Christian, though the fact may have been so.

Verse 12. *Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, &c.* In this verse, the Apostle sends greeting to some Christian women who, in their more retired spheres, sought to accomplish Christ's purposes, and to diffuse among their own sex the savour of His name. There were some companies to which they had access, from which men would be excluded; and with cheerful readiness and untiring zeal they appear to have given themselves up to the work of the Lord Jesus. It is clear from other passages of St. Paul's writings, that he did not approve of women being invested with the office of public religious teachers, so as to instruct promiscuous assemblies: but there are some departments of service, especially among their own sex, for which they are peculiarly fitted, and in which the gifts bestowed on them by Christ may be most profitably exercised.

Verse 13. *Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his*

mother and mine.

14. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

15. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

16. ^aSalute one another with a holy kiss. The Churches of Christ salute you.

^a 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 Thess. v. 26; 1 Peter v. 14.

mother and mine. There is a peculiar *delicacy* and *beauty* in the last expression here used by St. Paul; and it affords another striking illustration of the *gratitude* which he ever felt for affection shown to him. He refers to the mother of Rufus as having been *a mother to himself*. Thus in two brief words he has left on record the fact, that this Christian lady had acted towards him with the considerate and unwearied kindness which a mother's love might have dictated.

Verse 16. *Salute one another with a holy kiss.* A similar charge is found in several of St. Paul's other Epistles, referred to in the margin, and at the close of the first Epistle of St. Peter. The usage to which it refers was derived from the practice of the Jewish synagogue; but it had a far deeper significance at the close of Christian worship, than it could have before the appearance of the Saviour. It was the outward expression of the conviction, that *Christ's people constitute one sacred brotherhood*, one holy family of which He is the Lord and Head. This feeling should be cherished now, and we should seek opportunities of manifesting it; although the particular mode of doing so by *the kiss* has been laid aside. While this practice

17. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

† Acts xv. 1, 5, 24; 1 Tim. vi. 3.

‡ 1 Cor. v. 9, 11; 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14; 2 Tim. iii. 5; Titus iii. 10;
2 John 10.

continued, the Apostles were anxious to guard its *purity*, and to cut off any occasion of reproach which it might furnish to the enemies of the Cross. "Salute one another with a *holy kiss*." The kiss, of course, was a mere circumstance, which might be discontinued according to the altered usages of society, or at the dictate of Christian prudence. *But the feeling which it expressed belongs to all time.* The people of Christ, however different their outward position, however varied their intellectual culture, are *one in Him*. The ties of a most intimate and holy relationship—a relationship which even death cannot sever—bind them to each other; and in Christian worship the vivid consciousness of that relationship should influence all our feelings.

Verse 17. *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences &c.* The Apostle now proceeds to give a *final* charge and warning to the Roman believers, with a view to guard their *peace* and *unity* as a Church. He calls upon them to shun those persons, whoever they might be, who should seek to break up their harmony, regardless of the "stumblingblocks" which they cast in the path of weak believers and of inquirers after salvation. In describing the character and conduct of these persons, he uses language of just though fearful severity. They cared not about impugning "the doctrine" in which the Churches had been instructed by their inspired teachers; they bowed to no authority, and had no reverence for the

18. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but 'their own belly; and "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

1 Phil. iii. 19; 1 Tim. vi. 5.

2 Col. ii. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 6; Titus i. 10; 2 Peter ii. 3.

truth of Christ; but they set up their own judgment, and pursued their own private ends. They wished to be themselves the leaders of a party, reckless of the discord which they introduced into the Church, and utterly indifferent to the sacred interests which they imperilled. Such persons St. Paul charged the Roman Christians to "avoid,"—not only to discountenance their proceedings, but, as far as possible, to withdraw from intercourse with them. The *guilt* of the conduct here described can scarcely be overestimated. It involves treachery to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and an open resistance to His plans of grace.

Verse 18. *For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly; &c.* In these words St. Paul completes his exposure of the deceitful and wicked conduct of some who troubled the early Churches, and sought to break them up into hostile factions. He affirms that the plausible addresses and attractive promises of these persons were altogether vain, and were designed to conceal a degraded selfishness. The parties referred to did not really aim at serving Christ, but only at promoting some low personal interest. A most instructive and admonitory train of thought is suggested by the words, "They that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ." They remind us that in all we do, and more especially in all we do in the Church, we should aim simply at serving Christ. This principle is our only safeguard; and the observance of it is essential both

19. For "your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you ^owise unto that which is good, and ||simple concerning evil.

* Rom. i. 8. o Matt. x. 16; 1 Cor. xiv. 20. || Or, *harmless*.

to our *success* in Christ's work, and to our *Master's approval*. "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." An habitual reference to the will of the Lord Jesus forms the great security for *peace* and *brotherly love* among the members of the Church. It will cause us to rejoice in each other's gifts and usefulness; and it will lead us to bear with one another, if in anything we see differently, esteeming the interests of Christ's kingdom—interests bound up with the peace and unity of His people—paramount to all others.

Verse 19. *For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: &c.* The sentiments which St. Paul here expresses are most appropriate to the final charge which he had just delivered, as well as to the whole series of his counsels and admonitions in this Epistle. He delicately, but very clearly, intimates, that he had a firm and even joyous confidence, that the Roman Christians would receive and follow his instructions; since he was assured, by the concurrent testimony of many, that they were prepared to honour and act upon apostolic teaching. But the joy which he felt on this ground was combined with an anxious wish, that they might never know by experience the fearful evils that would result from a neglect of the doctrine and commands of Christ, and from listening to those who sought to sow discord among them. Hence he adds, "But I would have you wise unto that which is

20. And ^p the God of peace ^q shall || bruise Satan under your feet shortly. ^r The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

^p Rom. xv. 33. ^q Gen. iii. 15. || Or, *tread*.

^r Verse 24; 1 Cor. xvi. 23; 2 Cor. xiii. 14; Phil. iv. 23; 1 Thess. v. 28; 2 Thess. iii. 18; Rev. xxii. 21.

good, and simple concerning evil." The form of character presented in these words is most lovely and attractive. The combination of *wisdom* with *simplicity*—wisdom in relation to truth and goodness, and simplicity, the result of inexperience, in relation to that which is evil—gives to the Christian mind a moral beauty which approaches even to the purity and excellence of the heavenly state.

Verse 20. *And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.* The last remark of the Apostle brought vividly to his mind the truth, that the Church of God is now in a *state of conflict*; and that the great adversary, Satan, marshals the forces of evil to assail the people of Christ, and seeks especially to ruin them, or undermine their influence, by discord and divisions. But in this conflict we have no need to fear. He who has become our God and Father through the provisions of redemption, and who, as "the God of peace," delights over our union with Himself in holy fellowship, and our union with each other in a common faith and love, can frustrate the purposes of the destroyer, and enable us to triumph over him. The struggle may continue for awhile; but eventually, and that ere long, an Arm mightier than our own shall prostrate our adversary beneath our feet, and crown us with victory through Him that loved us.—Having expressed this joyous anticipation, St. Paul introduces the *benediction* with which,

21. 'Timotheus my workfellow, and 'Lucius, and
 " Jason, and " Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.

22. I Tertius, who wrote *this* Epistle, salute you
 in the Lord.

s Acts xvi. 1; Phil. ii. 19; Col. i. 1; 1 Thess. iii. 2; 1 Tim. i. 2;
 Heb. xiii. 23. t Acts xiii. 1. u Acts xvii. 5. x Acts xx. 4.

as it should seem, he at first designed to close the Epistle. He invokes on all the believers at Rome the abounding "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." That grace meets all the wants of the human spirit, and prepares it for the higher joys of that state upon which our Lord Himself has entered as the Head and Forerunner of His people.

Verse 21. *Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.* To the affectionate greetings which he himself had sent to several Christians whom he knew at Rome, St. Paul here adds the salutations of some of his friends, who were now with him, to the whole Church there. At the head of these he places Timothy, recognising him as one who shared his holy toil in the cause of Christ.—It is doubtful whether the phrase which we render "my kinsmen," in the latter part of the verse, should be strictly so understood, or should be taken in the wider sense of "my countrymen." But the point is unimportant.

Verse 22. *I Tertius, who wrote this Epistle, salute you in the Lord.* This verse shows that Tertius acted as St. Paul's amanuensis, in regard to this Letter. From other passages in the Apostle's writings,—especially 1 Cor. xvi. 21, and 2 Thess. iii. 17, collated with Gal. vi. 13,—we learn that it was his ordinary practice to employ an amanuensis, himself attesting the genuineness of each Epistle with his own signature. Tertius, doubtless, obtained St. Paul's consent to

23. ^y Gaius, mine host, and of the whole Church, saluteth you. ^z Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

24. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

^y 1 Cor. i. 14. ^z Acts xix. 22 ; 2 Tim. iv. 20.

^a Verse 20 ; 1 Thess. v. 28.

insert this greeting as coming direct from himself; and these few words seem to indicate the *satisfaction* which he felt in having been the instrument of writing such an Epistle to the Christians at Rome.

Verse 23. *Gaius, mine host, and of the whole Church, saluteth you.* Gaius was a distinguished member of the Church at Corinth, and was one of the very few whom Paul himself baptized there. (1 Cor. i. 14, 16.) He was evidently a man of large-hearted hospitality, prepared to welcome all Christians who might visit Corinth; and it is probable that he afforded some spacious room in his own house for assemblies of the Church.

Verse 24. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* There is no sufficient reason to doubt the genuineness of this verse, although it is omitted in several good MSS. We can easily understand that to some copyists it would appear unlikely, that St. Paul should repeat the benediction which he had only just given; (verse 20;) but a deeper view of his character and habits of thought will lead to an opposite conclusion. He was never weary of speaking of "the grace of the Lord Jesus," as the richest possession of the human spirit, as that which only can sustain us in this probationary life, and prepare us for the glories of the world to come. It had been, apparently, his original design to close the Epistle with verse 20; but

25. Now ^b to Him that is of power to stablish you
 ‘ according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus
 Christ, ‘ according to the revelation of the mystery,
 ‘ which was kept secret since the world began,

^b Eph. iii. 20 ; 1 Thess. iii. 13 ; 2 Thess. ii. 17 ; iii. 3 ; Jude 24.

^c Rom. ii. 16. . . ^d Eph. i. 9 ; iii. 3, 4, 5 ; Col. i. 27.

^e 1 Cor. ii. 7 ; Eph. iii. 5, 9 ; Col. i. 26.

having, as in some other cases, added a few supplementary words, he repeats the invocation of blessing—of the fulness of “ grace”—from Him who has redeemed us, and who is the Giver of peace, and purity, and strength.

Verse 25. *Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, &c.* This doxology is most comprehensive and sublime ; and it forms a fitting close to this great Epistle, in which St. Paul had unfolded the plan of God for human salvation, and the riches of that grace which flows from Christ to every believer. The themes on which he had dwelt now rose before his mind in all their amplitude and grandeur ; and he interweaves them with this solemn ascription of praise to GOD, as the Fountain of all wisdom, and of all spiritual strength and joy. In some MSS. these verses are appended to chapter xiv. : but the present arrangement is that best supported both by external and internal evidence.

In this doxology St. Paul first adverts to the truth, that the *strength* by which we are *upheld* in the Christian life, and by which our graces are *established* and *matured*, is derived from God ; and that He possesses in Himself *resources* amply sufficient to sustain *all* His people, and to crown them with victory at last. He then beautifully intimates that the “ establishment ” which he desired for believers was establishment *in the truth of Christ* and in the

26. But *f* now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment

f Eph. i. 9; 2 Tim. i. 10; Titus i. 2, 3; 1 Peter i. 20.

holy affections which correspond to it. And, having referred to that truth as set forth in the "Gospel" which it was his own happiness and honour to proclaim, he adds the remarkable words,—"*and the preaching of Jesus Christ.*" Thus he recalls the thought, which the whole course of this Epistle tended to illustrate, that CHRIST is Himself *the theme* of the evangelical announcement. He is the Centre around which all the doctrines, and promises, and precepts, of the Gospel stand in beautiful order and harmony; He is the ground of every blessing vouchsafed to man; and He is the living Source of that grace which fills the soul with peace, conforms it to holiness, and animates it with the hope of eternal life.—And now another truth rushes on the mind of the Apostle,—a truth on which he was accustomed to dwell with profound and solemn interest. He recognises in the public announcement of the work, and sacrifice, and mediatorial glory, of the Lord Jesus, and in the constitution of mercy established through Him, "*the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began,*"—the manifestation and development of that *counsel* which was *hidden in the Divine Mind* from eternal ages, and which was only faintly shadowed forth in former dispensations of truth and grace to mankind. St. Paul ever triumphed in the thought, that the "*mystery*" towards which prophets, and kings, and righteous men looked with eager and anxious eyes, but which was, to a large extent, shrouded from their view, is now disclosed in its riches of grace and blessing, and all men are invited to come and partake of life and peace in Christ.

of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for
 ' the obedience of faith :

g Acts vi. 7 ; Rom. i. 5 ; xv. 18.

Verse 26. *But now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment &c.* Another consideration, in which St. Paul took deep interest, is here combined with the truth, that the announcement of the Christian scheme involves the revelation of the mystery which had been so long kept secret. All the facts of that scheme, and all its offers of peace and blessing, are, he affirms, in accordance with *the intimations of the ancient Scriptures* ; so that the messengers of the Lord Jesus could again and again appeal to those Scriptures, and show that the Christian economy reveals their depth of meaning. This thought the Apostle had brought forward in the opening of this Epistle ; (i. 2 ;) and now that he is about to close it, he reverts to it with evident satisfaction. Like his great Master, he honoured the Old Testament Scriptures ; and traced in their predictions and types the truths which are now distinctly and fully unfolded.—From this consideration the Apostle passes to another, to which also he had given prominence in the commencement of this Epistle, and which its reasonings had been designed to establish and illustrate. He speaks of the Christian message as *that which is to be proclaimed, by Divine appointment, to all nations*, in order to bring them to “the obedience of faith,” to lead them to rely on the Lord Jesus as their only Hope and Refuge, to embrace with confidence all His promises, and to bow to every intimation of His will. (Compare i. 5, 16, 17.)—Nor should we omit to mark the peculiar force of the epithet which St. Paul here applies to the Most High,—“the everlasting God.” It contains, doubtless, an

27. To ^h God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

^h 1 Tim. i. 17; vi. 16; Jude 25.

allusion to the statement in verse 25, that the "mystery" now disclosed had been hidden "from eternity," or "from everlasting ages;" and it recalls the thought, that God, as the Eternal and Unchangeable One, in now commanding His Gospel to be preached to all nations, is only carrying out the counsel of His own will, formed not only before the human family was scattered over the earth, but even before this world itself rose into being.

Verse 27. *To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.* In these words St. Paul completes his solemn ascription of praise to the Eternal God. They suggest to us sublime and animating truths. How full of meaning, for instance, is the first expression, "*To God only wise!*" All wisdom *centres* in God: all wisdom *emanates* from Him. Nor is this all. The loftiest created intellect has only a limited range of thought; and imperfection consequently attaches to its conceptions and plans. But God is *perfectly wise*. His counsels, unfathomable as they are by us,—and *His* counsels *only*,—are characterised by *absolute wisdom*.—To Him, also, *glory* properly belongs. There is a lustre encircling His character before which every creature should bow in lowly adoration; while the ascription of praise to Him should be the sweetest exercise of every dependent mind. All His perfections, and especially His moral perfections, are glorious and awe-inspiring. But in Christ their dazzling brightness is softened to our gaze; and while they fill us with lowly reverence, they attract and tranquillise our minds. It is "*through Jesus Christ*" that we are enabled to approach the Father, to unite with

¶ Written to the Romans from Corinth, and sent by Phœbe, servant of the Church at Cenchrea.

the angelic hosts in ascriptions of praise ; while it is *the work of Christ*, and *the economy of grace in Him*, which afford the most impressive displays of all the Divine perfections, and which are made prominent in the joyous anthem of heaven and of earth.—And the Apostle, as he closes this doxology, intimates that *throughout eternity* the glory of God, as revealed in the economy of redemption, will shine forth and be devoutly acknowledged. “To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ *for ever*. Amen.” When the revolutions of earth shall have reached their close, and the crowning act of our Lord’s mediatorial sovereignty—even the exercise of the final judgment—shall have been performed, then, as the ages roll on, the glory of THE TRIUNE JEHOVAH will shine forth in the completed results of the mediatorial scheme, and the entire brotherhood of the glorified saints of Christ will acknowledge the rich and exhaustless grace which has been vouchsafed to them through THE INCARNATE SON.



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